

**'WE ARE A NEW RACE:' BOOKER T. WASHINGTON'S USE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN
SPIRITUALS IN THE CREATION OF A NEW NEGRO IMAGE**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Booker T. Washington used music to project a New Negro image to the American public while also instilling the qualities of the New Negro into his students. Washington hoped to uplift the African American race by challenging racial caricatures prominent in American society. He created after Washington's own personality and was a responsible, Christian American. This study also shows that the New Negro was a racial uplift strategy being used well before WWI, and that there were multiple New Negro representations throughout the United States and throughout US history.

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INDEX WORDS: Booker T. Washington, New Negro, Harlem Renaissance, Spirituals, Music, Tuskegee

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This study examines how Booker T. Washington used music to project a New Negro image to the American public while also instilling the qualities of this New Negro into his students. Washington hoped to uplift the African American race by challenging racial caricatures prominent in American society. Washington's New Negro was patterned after Washington's own personality and was a respectable, Christian, southern African-American. This study also shows that the New Negro was a racial uplift strategy being used well before WWI, and that there were multiple New Negro movements throughout the United States and throughout US history.

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INTRODUCTION

Tuskegee Institute celebrated Founder's Day and its Fiftieth Anniversary with a high profile series of events over three days in mid-April 1931. The *New York Times* fully covered the event, along with correspondents from newspapers all over the country, from pre-event planning to post-event coverage. Dignitaries from all over the country, came to honor Tuskegee and its late founder, Booker T. Washington, with festivities prepared under Washington's successor, Dr. Robert Moton.¹ Isaac Fisher, an 1898 Tuskegee graduate, waited to take the stage inside the Tuskegee Chapel as the Tuskegee Choir, Tuskegee Quartet, and Tuskegee Band performed a series of vocal and instrumental pieces. These performances were all variations of the African American spirituals, songs that began during the antebellum period as expressions of slaves' hope for freedom and became known nationally and internationally thanks to the Fisk Jubilee Singers in the 1870s.²

After the hour-long musical program, Fisher took the stage to speak. He began by thanking the audience and Dr. Robert Moton. In keeping with the theme of the musical program, Moton personally asked Fisher to participate in this momentous occasion as a key speaker during the musical program and requested Fisher speak about Washington's connection with black music and how it pertained to Tuskegee.³ The title for the event, "Up From Slavery: A Festival of Negro Music," was an overt connection between Booker T. Washington's iconic book and

¹ *New York Times*, New York City, NY; "Tuskegee Celebrates Fiftieth Anniversary," *The Afro American*, Baltimore, MD, 11 April 1931, pg. 15.

² "Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration, 1881-1931, April 13, 1931," program, Subseries 9.3a, Dawson or Tuskegee Related Programs, 1911-1990, Box 100, Folder 37, William Levi Dawson Papers. Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University; For more on the Fisk Jubilee Singers see: Toni P. Anderson, *"Tell Them We are Singing for Jesus:" The Original Fisk Jubilee Singer and Christian Reconstruction, 1871-1878* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2010).

³ "Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration, 1881-1931."

African Americans' iconic music, perfectly capturing the connection between Washington's goal of racial uplift and his desire to preserve African American music, a connection Fisher made sure to validate and cement for the audience with his speech entitled, "Booker T. Washington and the Negro Spirituals."⁴

"I want you to know," Fisher told Dr. Moton and the chapel audience, "you are worthily continuing Dr. Washington's work for the preservation" of African American music. Continuing with this strong connection, Fisher reminisced about his time as a student in the choir and his time as a Northern Agent, traveling with the Tuskegee Quartet. Washington, he claimed, consistently requested the choir sing spirituals and insisted on their performance by the quartet before speeches as a way to "transport him into a higher realm of eloquence." Fisher told the large audience of students and faculty and prominent whites and blacks that no one loved the spirituals more than Washington. According to Fisher, Washington believed the spirituals were songs of great power and inspiration that deserved and required preservation for future generations. But, Fisher continued, the spirituals were also a tool Washington used in his effort to create and develop relationships in his effort to uplift African Americans. "He had learned," Fisher related to the chapel audience, "that a few of these songs in an hour could create more friendship than months of philosophic arguments could do." Washington used these spirituals as a "powerful solvent" to relieve white antagonism and as a tool to create a "sympathetic atmosphere" in which to display and discuss the progress of African Americans. Their power as a tool to smooth relations between the races and as an inspiration to African Americans led Washington, Fisher continued, to dedicate himself and Tuskegee to the spirituals' preservation. While they were certainly practical and useful as tools for interracial interaction, Fisher claimed

⁴ "Booker T. Washington and the Negro Spirituals," *The Tuskegee Messenger-Fiftieth Anniversary Edition*, pg. 26, Isaac Fisher Papers, Box 15. Tuskegee University Archives Repository (hereafter Tuskegee Archives).

Washington viewed their main contribution and value as being an “undoubted cultural asset to the Negro for all time.” They were not just pragmatic, alienated tools of race relations but were deeply connected and irreplaceable pieces of African American culture. Finally, Fisher fittingly ended his speech with a request that the audience, particularly the students, continue to preserve, use, and share the spirituals as a tribute to Washington’s memory.⁵

The music before and after Fisher’s speech helped strengthen this connection between Washington and the spirituals. The selection and style of the performances connected two generations of African Americans. Fisher’s endorsement of the musical style and selections as being worthy and true to Washington’s memory also indicates a new connection that previous scholars have ignored or overlooked. Tuskegee’s Director of Music, William L. Dawson, designed a program that resembled a Harlem Renaissance style musical performance.⁶ The program included solely African American spirituals, a favorite genre of Renaissance scholars and musicians alike, performed by many musical groups from the school like the Tuskegee Quartet, the Tuskegee Choir, Boys and Girls Glee Club, and the Tuskegee Band.⁷

The selection of spirituals fit with many Renaissance writers’ admiration and appeals for this style to be reinstated as a key part of African American culture of all social and economic levels. Indeed, two of the most recognizable Renaissance figures, scholars W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke, each purported these sentiments during the Harlem Renaissance. Though Locke contended that the altering of these tunes into a European choral style caused them to become

⁵ “Booker T. Washington and the Negro Spirituals.”

⁶ The Harlem Renaissance was an African American artistic movement located in New York during the 1920s with the purpose of expressing African American culture. This movement focused on positive, middle-class images of African Americans meant to change the white perception of African Americans while also unifying African American cultural identity.

⁷ “Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration, 1881-1931.”

“artificial devices,” others like Du Bois enjoyed and encouraged these alterations.⁸ In fact, many musicians and African American composers during the Harlem Renaissance altered the spirituals to mimic Western European musical norms.⁹ Many of the spirituals included on the program for Tuskegee’s celebration were composed in this way by prominent, classically trained Harlem Renaissance composers of the age, such as R. Nathaniel Dett, Harry T. Burleigh, S. Coleridge-Taylor, and Tuskegee’s own William L. Dawson. These composers had used themes from the spirituals to create classical pieces in a Western European musical style, and Dawson programmed spirituals in this style into a celebration that Fisher considered representative of Washington’s views and fitting of his legacy.¹⁰

While Dawson’s construction of the musical portion of the celebration might provide an alternate explanation for the Harlem Renaissance nature of this program, Fisher’s endorsement of it as representative of Washington’s views creates an interesting connection between Washington, traditionally considered an accommodationist to Jim Crow and southern whites, and the Harlem Renaissance, traditionally considered the height of the “New Negro Movement,” a movement specifically designed to challenge the Jim Crow system.¹¹ This study argues the association between the “New Negro Movement” and the Harlem Renaissance is too limiting.

⁸ Alain Locke, “The Negro Spirituals,” in *The New Negro* (New York: Arno Press, 1923), 199-200; Idem., *The Negro and His Music: Negro Art: Past and Present* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 18; W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)

⁹ Lawrence Schenbeck, “Representing America, Instructing Europe: The Hampton Choir Tours Europe,” *Black Music Research Journal* 25 (Spring-Fall, 2005), 11.

¹⁰ “Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration, 1881-1931.” For more on these composers’ links to the Harlem Renaissance: Jon Michael Spencer, *New Negroes and Their Music: The Success of the Harlem Renaissance* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 20, 64, 73-74, 125.

¹¹ For more on scholars’ views of Washington: Kevern Verney, *The Art of the Possible: Booker T. Washington and Black Leadership in the United States, 1881-1925* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 67; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed. *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress: Up From Slavery 100 Years Later* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 3. For more on the Harlem Renaissance and New Negro Movement connection: Victor A. Kramer and Robert A. Russ, eds., *Harlem Renaissance Re-examined: A Revised and Expanded Edition* (Troy, NY: Whitston Publishing Co., 1997), 4 and 9; Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 3; Wilson J. Moses, “The Lost World of the Negro, 1895-1919: Black Literacy and Intellectual Life before the ‘Renaissance,’” *Black American Literature Forum* 21 (Spring-Summer, 1987), 61.

Indeed, the identification of only one "New Negro Movement" or only one type of "New Negro" is too limiting. Instead, there were a multitude of New Negroes that emerged within a multitude of New Negro movements, and these movements were dependent upon the historical context of the time and the individual leadership of these movements. As a result, there is not "The New Negro Movement," as most scholars claim, but many New Negro movements that began, evolved, and faded in different regions, different time periods, and with different leaders. These New Negro movements, and particularly their leaders, even competed and thwarted each other's efforts in the belief that their strategy provided African Americans with the best chance at racial uplift and acceptance. This is not to say that all of these movements were completely antithetical to each other. While the leaders and factions competed for the leadership of African American uplift, these movements generally had the same goals and tactics. They only slightly differed on the broad conceptual strategy and avenues to achieve African American equality and uplift.

Booker T. Washington's use of music, predominantly the spirituals, illustrates this existence of multiple New Negro movements. This study's focus on Washington allows one to see that elements of the Harlem Renaissance and "The New Negro Movement" existed well before World War I, the typical historical divide that designates the beginning of these movements. A study that focuses on Washington also allows one to see how different movements that have the same goals and many of the same tactics can develop differently depending on strategy and leadership. Washington and Du Bois' battle for the leadership of African American uplift has been heavily covered by scholars. This study illustrates that their differences were more about who would hold leadership and impress their strategy of racial uplift on America rather than differences in goals or even tactics. The result of this and many other smaller conflicts was the creation of multiple New Negro movements, each competing for

supremacy of leadership and control of how to represent the New Negro to America. In addition, by viewing "The New Negro Movement" more broadly and not limiting it to the decade or two after World War I, a new view of Washington becomes apparent. This view of Washington shows an African American leader that continually sought to help African Americans uplift themselves and actively fought against Jim Crow with racial uplift and New Negro discourse. Like Renaissance figures decades later, Washington attempted to alter the discourse about African American culture and characteristics by presenting a new image of African Americans to white America while also attempting to make that representation a reality within the African American community.

Washington used this idea of a "new" African American race to discuss African Americans' potential for uplift. Washington referred to African Americans as "a new race" that possessed unlimited potential and a bright future. For Washington, the race was new both in a sense of being different from the race in slavery but also in the sense that they had yet to develop their own civilization in America. African Americans after slavery, he argued, "have the virtue that we are still" going forward. Washington used the discourse of a new race or New Negro to display the opportunities his people had to grow and develop.¹² In addition, Washington believed this new race could and should be different from the African American of the past. In *A New Negro for a New Century*, Washington displays the progress of African Americans since emancipation. The express purpose of this task was to show how different African Americans were at the turn of the century rather than during or directly after slavery. As J. E. MacBrady writes in the introduction, "The Negro of to-day is in every phase of life far advanced over the

¹² Booker T. Washington to E.B. Webster, 15 August 1913, in Louis R. Harlan, ed., *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, 14 vols. (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1972-1989), 12:257. Hereafter cited as *BTW Papers*. Booker T. Washington, *My Larger Education: Being Chapters from My Experience* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1911), 128.

Negro of 30 years ago.” Washington echoed that sentiment in his chapter on African American education, claiming that drastic changes had taken place in the African American population from emancipation to 1900 because of educational institutions.¹³ For Washington, African Americans were simultaneously far ahead of the previous enslaved generation while also not yet at their zenith of potential. New meant both an elevation from the enslaved generation but also an opportunity for further growth and acculturation.

Despite Washington’s and other references to a “new” Negro race well before WWI, “The New Negro Movement” and Booker T. Washington have rarely been viewed outside of their narrow purviews due to a tendency of scholars to view this event and this leader through an essentialist lens, simplifying their complexities to a narrow, and often singular, set of attributes. For example, scholars have traditionally discussed the Harlem Renaissance and “The New Negro Movement” as belonging to a particular time period, exhibiting particular characteristics, and led by particular leaders. While historical divisions are useful and necessary in some cases, these divisions, especially when they exclude important pieces of the historical picture, can obscure rather than elucidate our understanding of the past and its development. The exclusion of Booker T. Washington from the traditional story of the New Negro ignores the genesis and important evolution of New Negro movements. Ignoring the Fisk Jubilee Singers and African American educational institutions, especially those in the South, excludes the foundation of the Harlem Renaissance decades later. African Americans during the Reconstruction period and the Nadir were just as concerned with representing a new image of the African American race to America and constructing that new African American race in actuality within the black communities through cultural production as African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance. That these

¹³ Booker T. Washington, *A New Negro for a New Century: An Accurate and Up-to-Date Record of the Upward Struggles of the Negro Race* (Chicago: American Publishing House, 1900), 3, 79-92.

representations and characteristics do not completely align with the representations in the post-WWI era does not necessarily indicate a separate historical process but simply displays an evolution of and variety within the same process, that of representing and creating the New Negro for the purpose of racial unification and uplift. Indeed, a closer look at both the Nadir and Harlem Renaissance era indicate many more similarities than normally acknowledged in scholarship. For a full understanding of this new body of scholarship that has been expanding the “New Negro” to other genres, regions, and time periods, and to completely understand how the “New Negro” trope fits within Washington’s strategy for racial uplift, a brief synopsis of how scholars have traditionally defined “New Negro” is necessary.

The Harlem Renaissance, scholars argue, took place in the 1920s, between WWI and the Great Depression and centered on artistic and intellectual products emanating from Harlem, New York. The Great Migration of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North made this cultural movement, led by the African American middle-class and elites, possible and infused it with a fervent race consciousness and race pride.¹⁴ This race pride translated into a desire for racial unification and universal racial uplift of African Americans. Faced with a staunch Jim Crow racism and racial discrimination, African American artists and intellectuals during the Harlem Renaissance attempted to use art, literature, music, and scholarship to uplift African Americans and prove their right to equality in America.¹⁵ Gene Jarrett claims in *Representing the Race* that African American intellectuals even used racial uplift political ideology as a claim to civilization and writers penned novels depicting racial uplift narratives as

¹⁴ Huggins, *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*, 3.

¹⁵ Sharon Lynette Jones, *Rereading the Harlem Renaissance: Race, Class, and Gender in the Fiction of Jessie Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston, and Dorothy West* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 10.

part of African American political agency.¹⁶ This cultural production sought to create a new, more positive image of African Americans and African American culture to combat the still prevalent minstrel image in American society. It facilitated some of the major characteristics of what contemporaries and subsequent scholars have called the "New Negro." Emerging from this cultural movement, the "New Negro" was the leadership of and the desired product of the Harlem Renaissance's "The New Negro Movement."¹⁷

According to scholars, "The New Negro Movement" within the Harlem Renaissance attempted to portray positive traits, as defined by both racial societies within America, in the effort to shape and project a new African American image. Through art, music, literature, and other artistic forms, African Americans displayed the "New Negro" as educated, refined, and disciplined as opposed to ignorant, primitive and childish.¹⁸ Between WWI and the Great Depression, the "New Negro" also had particular qualities that set this "New Negro" apart from the "Old Negro." The "New Negro" was self-assertive, racially conscious, part of a new urban culture, and had discarded the last vestiges of slavery. At the same time, however, scholars have claimed the "New Negro" and the Harlem Renaissance used folk-cultural elements in their artistic expression of this new African American image. These folk elements acted as signifiers of a distinct African American identity and heritage.¹⁹ Thus, "New Negroes" during the Harlem Renaissance were part of the dominant Victorian culture of white America while also containing a sense of militant racial pride and heritage, developed and fashioned within the Great Migration to Northern urban centers. These "New Negroes" expressed this racial consciousness and pride

¹⁶ Gene Andrew Jarrett, *Representing the Race: A New Political History of African American Literature* (New York: NYU Press, 2011), 91.

¹⁷ Gerald Lyn Early, ed. *My Soul's High Song: The Collected Writings of Countee Cullen, Voice of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 36.

¹⁸ Louis Gates Jr., "The Trope of the New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black," *Representations* 24 Special Issue: *America Reconstructed, 1840-1940* (Autumn, 1988), 150.

¹⁹ Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 304.

through artistic expression of folk culture. They coupled this with an attempt to project a new image of African Americans that defined African Americans as race conscious and self-assertive, but also sought to project African Americans as civilized, middle-class, and educated citizens of America.²⁰ As a historical process set apart by scholars, then, the Harlem Renaissance and “The New Negro Movement” have been intricately tied together as a cultural movement that developed and projected a new set of attributes, characteristics, and images in order to craft a new African American identity in the minds of both white and black Americans.

I argue this cultural movement to uplift African Americans through racial pride and race consciousness occurred in many forms and throughout many historical periods. While many different disciplines participated in projecting and creating a New Negro through southern African American educational institutions in the pre-WWI era, the one discussed in this thesis focuses on music. Leaders of this New Negro movement used music in multiple ways to project a New Negro to whites and create a New Negro in actuality. African American leaders, like Washington, used music within a New Negro discourse to provide positive connections in a more overt manner. Washington used musical performances, like the Tuskegee Singer’s Northern tours, as a way to display his New Negro’s positive qualities, and African American schools, such as Tuskegee, used music as an educational tool to instill New Negro qualities and characteristics into students in order to make the discourse and performances a reality within the next generation of African Americans. The New Negro discourse using music and the musical performances acted as social performances of “authentic” New Negro blackness designed to alter the typical images of African Americans away from the minstrel image and toward a new, positive image within American society. The use of music as an educational tool to instill New

²⁰ Huggins, *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*, 3.

Negro characteristics into students acted as cultural performances meant to redefine African American culture for African Americans through ritualistic repetition of this New Negro image.

At the core of these musical performances were African American cultural productions, slave spirituals. The spirituals were the product of slave expression and agency during years of subjugation. African American slaves used music, particularly spirituals, as a tool to endure and liberate themselves from slavery. The spirituals originated from the syncretizing of African music and dance with Christianity and, as such, were a unique expression of American slavery. African Americans sought solace from slavery through these songs by confronting their fears and tribulations of the human world while projecting their hopes and future into the afterlife. The spirituals expressed the sorrow of slavery and the joy of impending freedom and victory in heaven. Music dominated every aspect of slave life, from working in the fields to the creation of a counterculture as a protest against white masters. Work songs added an element of escapism while slaves worked in the fields and even set the pace of field work at times. Since African Americans were the ones singing and selecting the songs, this music added an element of control to what is normally viewed as a powerless situation for the slaves. African Americans embedded these songs with double meaning that allowed them to subtly and safely challenge racial subjugation. The spirituals were also a means to gain control over a seemingly uncontrollable situation. Spirituals acted as a survival mechanism to cope with the atrocities of slavery and as coded messages for different activities that challenged slavery's power. This music acted as a protest and weapon against slavery and slave owners that attacked the institution while safeguarding the slaves.²¹

²¹ Lawrence Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift and American Music, 1878-1943* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 112.

Spirituals continued after emancipation to be a coded message against racial discrimination. African American educational institutions, like Fisk University, appropriated them for their traveling quartets and choirs and used them at the schools during Sunday services. The reason for singing spirituals remained largely the same in the post-emancipation period as it had in the antebellum era. Though African Americans were no longer held in bondage, they still experienced discrimination and racial inequality. The spirituals were appropriated in the post-slavery era as a means to form a racially cohesive African American race proud of its past, to instill religious morals within the African American community, and to challenge the systemic racism within American society. The spirituals fit within the broader African American musical framework of the post-slavery era. Like the blues, jazz, and other African Americans musical genres, spirituals were used to challenge racial discrimination and were derided by the upper classes of African Americans as part of lower class culture. Also, like other African American musical genres, spirituals were used as an internal education of African American culture which sought to instill specific values and beliefs within the African American community. And, though spirituals took a drastically different approach, these songs were like blues and jazz in that they were used as a way to protest racial discrimination within the Jim Crow system. While blues often openly castigated the Jim Crow system, performance of the spirituals acted more as a social currency that was meant to facilitate social mobility and acknowledgement of the black race as assimilated, sophisticated, educated Americans. This, performers and leaders hoped, would ultimately lead to social, economic, and political acceptance. *New Negro Conservatism*

This movement focused on positive representations of African Americans. After the Reconstruction period, Tuskegee and the other African American schools sought to project African Americans as civilized, middle-class, moral, and American. They attempted to assimilate

¹⁴ Thomas, "The Low World of the Negro," *History Lesson* 17:20, "The Trope of the New Negro," 120-133.

African Americans into the Victorian middle-class culture that dominated America at the turn of the century, and they hoped this would lead to acceptance of African Americans as equal citizens, political participants, and industry workers. As a result, Washington used Tuskegee and its students as examples of the African American race. Washington used industrial education as a public platform to establish African Americans as hard-working and loyal while also using music, specifically spirituals, as a tool to represent African Americans as moral, civilized, and American. In short, Washington and other African Americans at educational institutions during this period sought to project a "New Negro" to northern and southern whites, one that was a participant in middle-class culture, a follower of Victorian ideals, an individual of high moral character, and a hard-working citizen of America.

This argument fits within a new wave of scholarship that has been growing since the late 1980s within the Harlem Renaissance/New Negro historiography. Scholars since this time have been focused on expanding the scope of the Harlem Renaissance/New Negro paradigm to include different genres of study, different regions of participation, and different time periods of operation than the traditional narrative—African American literature in Harlem, New York, from roughly 1919-1929. Building on scholarship like Wilson Moses' "The Lost World of the Negro, 1895-1919" and Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s "The Trope of the New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black," my study further expands the associations of "New Negro" to black educational institutions in the South during the post-Reconstruction period.²² This is not to say that I argue the post-Reconstruction period as the beginning of the New Negro. Conservatively the New Negro can be traced back to the Fisk Jubilee Singers of the 1870s, or even as far back as

²¹ Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Leon Andrew Jarrett, eds., *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation and African American Culture, 1892-1968* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 3.

²² Jack W. Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Reconstruction* (University Press, 1981), 34-35.

²² Moses, "The Lost World of the Negro;" Henry Louis Gates Jr., "The Trope of the New Negro," 129-155.

the arrival of the first African Americans to the colonies.²³ Connecting the New Negro only to the racial uplift movement of the Harlem Renaissance limits the understanding of the history of the racial uplift movements in the periods before WWI. At their core, New Negro movements were about projecting a new, more positive image of African Americans while also attempting to make this image a reality within the African American community.

A similar essentialism and counter-scholarship has taken place in the historiography of Booker T. Washington. Washington has traditionally been depicted as a pragmatist, Uncle Tom, and even a "feudal lord" that ruled a southern "kingdom" for his own benefit.²⁴ Washington, according to these scholars, put forth an accommodation strategy that sacrificed African American rights in order to gain southern support for his educational philosophy and school. Scholars of this vein claim Washington used Tuskegee and industrial education as platforms for his own self-aggrandizement and as a foundation to become the leading black voice in America. They view Washington's actions as timid and too accommodative to accomplish any real change. They discuss the Washington-Du Bois feud as if the two were polar opposites and as if Washington was the conservative impediment holding back African American progressives like Du Bois from effecting real change.²⁵ While many of these elements are apparent in Washington's life, he is more complicated and displays many more motives and traits than adherents of this interpretation have acknowledged.

My interpretation of Washington's leadership challenges the essentialist view of Washington as simply the industrial education sycophant of the white South. I agree with recent scholars who argue that Washington's apparent acquiescence acted as a survival mechanism and

²³ Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Gene Andrew Jarrett, eds, *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 3.

²⁴ Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 54-56.

²⁵ Verney, *The Art of the Possible*, 67.

infiltration strategy that allowed Washington to affect the system from within the South. Far from being an Uncle Tom, Washington was instead a restrained leader for racial uplift through multiple strategies. These strategies were all connected by Washington under the umbrella of industrial education. This thesis builds on this interpretation of Washington as a leader of the reserved racial uplift movement and argues Washington can be viewed as outspoken for his time and a leader that challenged Jim Crow through different mediums and themes to uplift African Americans.²⁶ Washington viewed Christianity, racial heritage, regional identity, and economic status as precursors and essential elements of racial uplift and African American political and social equality in America. This study offers new views of Washington, New Negro movements, and African American challenges to Jim Crow during the Nadir.

This thesis has been divided into four chapters, each detailing a different attribute that Washington attempted to instill in his students and project to white America. The first chapter focuses on the use of music in the crafting of an image of respectability to counter the primitive images prevalent in American culture. The second chapter displays Washington's use of music to craft a moral, Christian image for African Americans to replace the criminal image in popular culture due to minstrels. The third chapter shows how Washington attempted to instill and display a southern identity for African Americans. The final chapter completes the qualities Washington sought to craft in his New Negro. Washington used the spirituals to link African Americans to an American identity while also maintaining, and even reinforcing, their racial identity.

This study of music and the New Negro movement before WWI shows there were multiple New Negro movements all desiring racial uplift, and one of these was led by Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. This study argues Washington was

²⁶ Brundage, ed. *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress*, 74, 110, 126.

more than a pragmatist who sought vocational training as an accommodation strategy. Indeed, much of the supposed accommodation can be viewed as progressive attacks on the Jim Crow system when coupled with his use of music in his racial uplift strategy. Viewed holistically, Washington and Tuskegee challenged Jim Crow within the historical context of the time and used music as a key factor in these challenges. Finally, these projections were not simply figurative tropes or false images meant to provide a positive but ultimately disingenuous representation of African Americans. Instead, Washington and other African American school leaders attempted to duplicate in practice what they represented in theory. Not only did they send vocal groups North to provide visual and aural evidence of the educated, sophisticated New Negro but also attempted to actually instill these values into African American students with the hope they would emerge New Negroes and continue to instill these values in the following generations. The New Negro image Washington attempted to project through musical performances was, as Henry Gates Jr. has shown, a crafted fiction for public consumption.²⁷ Washington, however, desired this image to be a reality. He used Tuskegee as the base for an education and acculturation of the African American race into his New Negro. Using his massive influence in the South, especially after his 1895 speech at the Atlanta Exposition, Washington placed numerous "Little Booker T. Washingtons" as principals of a plethora of "Little Tuskegees." These disciples of Booker T. Washington were meant to spread the "Tuskegee Spirit" to southern blacks and instill Washington's New Negro ethos of respectability, Christianity, southernness, and African Americaness. In short, Washington sought not only to project a New Negro image but also to transform African Americans into this respectable, Christian, southern, African American New Negro image.

²⁷ Henry Louis Gates Jr., "The Trope of a New Negro," 133-135.

CHAPTER I

“ABOVE THE LEVEL OF NEGRO MINSTRELS:” CRAFTING A RESPECTABLE
AFRICAN AMERICAN IMAGE

Respectability topped the list of African American attributes Washington desired to project and cultivate in his New Negro. “Cultivate a reputation for reliability,” he told a Tennessee audience on one of his southern educational tours in November 1909. He implored them to make themselves “valued and respected members of the community” by refusing to settle for a job done “half-well.”²⁸ Washington intimately connected success with respectability, and he devoted his and Tuskegee’s efforts to providing African Americans the opportunity and skills to be successful. Washington designed Tuskegee’s industrial education program to meet these needs in the hope that Tuskegee’s graduates would spread throughout the South and be successful, projecting to white Americans the respectability of the African American race. Washington believed that all human beings, especially Americans, innately respected success regardless of its origin. As he told students at his alma mater, Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute, in 1907, “There is something in human nature which whether the individual be black or white, compel one to respect success.”²⁹

Music played a key role in the projection and education of respectability for Washington’s New Negro. Success in the Jim Crow era between Reconstruction and WWI necessitated a negotiation of acceptable displays of skill and power, which defined success. Music offered African Americans a safe and accepted way to display success and gain respect within America and even worldwide. Referencing the infamous Fisk Jubilee Singers,

²⁸ “Accounts of Washington’s Tour of Tuskegee,” 1909, in *BTW Papers*, 10:202.

²⁹ “A Speech at Hampton Institute,” 13 October 1907, in *BTW Papers*, 9:377.

Washington wrote to the editor of the Indianapolis *Freeman* that F.J. Loudin's work with the Singers in Europe did "much to give the race standing and respectability in England." "Few colored men from America," he continued, "are so highly respected" as Mr. Loudin.³⁰ Washington believed the success and popularity of the Fisk Jubilee Singers brought the entire race respect and uplifted African Americans by projecting a successful, respectable image to Europeans. Washington hoped to replicate this in America by using his own musical groups to duplicate the success of Loudin's Fisk Singers. This musical success was a way for Washington to connect African Americans more closely to a respectable middle-class status that bestowed an image of sophistication that Washington believed the New Negro should possess. Washington appropriated white Victorian ideals and culture by using music as a social performance of middle-class sophistication. By appropriating European music and the European musical style, Washington and Tuskegee attempted to cultivate and project an image of sophistication and respectability through musical performances and education.

The first step in recreating the New Negro through the spirituals required adapting the spirituals to a more appropriate medium to display respectability and sophistication. Washington followed the trends set by Fisk University and Hampton Institute by arranging and performing African American spirituals in a European choral style rather than the traditional African American slave style. Traditionally the spirituals were performed with a distinctive musical style that included learning songs by rote, improvised lyrics and melodies, and the call-and-response style. A common performance of the spirituals during the Antebellum and Civil War era included a group of African American slaves singing a tune they learned by listening as they worked in the fields. Led by a musical leader, these slaves listened as the leader sang the melody "call," often improvised in tune and lyrics, and replied with a repeated "response." This type of

³⁰ Booker T. Washington to Editor of the Indianapolis *Freeman*, 15 July 1899, in *BTW Papers*, 5:155.

performance included a participatory element that other performances did not; no audience sat listening to the slaves' performance. The slaves swayed, clapped, and participated rhythmically to the performance without a non-participatory audience.³¹

The spirituals of the Booker T. Washington Era were transformed from this folk style musical performance to resemble the sophisticated and respectable European art music. European, or Western style, music contained vastly different characteristics because it served a vastly different purpose. While African American spirituals were traditionally designed as an escape and expression of emotion, Western style music had the specific purpose of avoiding physical emotional response. Instead, the spectator was expected to view, or listen to, the art with a stoic detachment that Victorians believed amounted to appreciation and understanding of the art. As a result, this "highbrow" art form contained an Apollonian feature that prohibited participatory engagement in the musical performance by the spectator. Indeed, the more detached, or disembodied, the music was from participatory responses the more elevated its prestige. As one music scholar has stated, the "more disembodied the music, the more likely it can aspire to highbrow status."³² Washington's aspiration to create a respectable and sophisticated New Negro through music began with transforming African Americans' iconic music into an art form in the European style. This meant altering the spirituals to conform to European standard practices such as four-part harmonies and a detached musical performance style.

³¹ Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1997), 99-100; James M. Volo and Dorothy Deneen Volo, *The Antebellum Period* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 278-279; Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 73-74, 98, 172-173.

³² Marcel Sorce Keller, *What Makes Music European: Looking Beyond Sound* (Lanham MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 253-254.

This transformation began with the movement of these songs from generational memory to written form. Antebellum spirituals were learned through rote, or repetitive, listening and mimicking. Washington, however, continued and expanded upon a tradition began by Fisk University and Hampton Institute of transcribing these tunes into written form using Western style musical notation. This notation alone shifted this music towards a European style. As Thomas Fenner, the leader of Hampton's music department during Washington's tenure as a Hampton student, wrote in his book of spirituals arranged in European form, spirituals contain stylistic particularities "which we have no musical characters to represent." Combined with "accompaniments which can be carried away only in memory," Fenner's transcription of the spirituals into musical notation forced certain alterations which gravitated towards the European style.³³

The simple act of writing the spirituals down changed how this music was performed and passed on to succeeding generations. The spirituals had transformed from a musical form that constantly evolved and changed with each performer and each performance, passed down from generation to generation through aural learning; by transcribing them into musical notation these songs became more concrete and stable, a hallmark of art music, and were now passed down through a shared understanding of musical literacy. Christopher Small has pointed out that musical notation and the selection of "classics" speak to our musical culture. In the Western musical culture, a fascination developed early on with notated music. Music from cultures that do not transcribe them into notated form are labeled 'primitive,' perhaps even denied as being 'music' at all. "Generation after generation of musicians," Small writes, "have been so conditioned by the neat arrangements of black dots on the stave that they can think of music only

³³ Thomas P. Fenner, Frederic G. Rathburn, and Miss Bessie Cleaveland, arr., *Cabin and Plantation Songs as Sung by Hampton Students* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1901), iii-iv.

in those terms.”³⁴ Thus, the transition of this music to notated form was a necessary social act by African Americans like Booker T. Washington. To exhibit and educate sophistication in the African American community, Washington needed notated arrangements of African American spirituals. As a result, he commissioned Robert H. Hamilton, a member of the original Hampton Singers and eventual music director at Tuskegee Institute, to arrange a copy of notated spirituals for Tuskegee, just as Hampton and Fisk had done since the Reconstruction Era.³⁵

Arrangements published by African American schools in the late nineteenth century and recordings by Victory Recordings in the early twentieth century display the transformation of the spirituals into a European style. While traditional spirituals were not sung in unison, the harmonies were typically heterophony. Participants would listen or sing along in unison with the melody provided by the lead singer, interjecting or wandering from the melody when needed or desired to create embellished melodic lines.³⁶ One early transcriber of the original spirituals noted the difference in these tunes from Western style music. “There is no singing in parts, as we understand it,” William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison wrote in an 1867 compilation of African American spirituals. The non-lead singers, they added, “seem to follow their own whims, beginning where they please, striking an octave above or below...so as to effect a marvelous complication and variety.”³⁷ The arrangements in African American published works, however, contained European style harmonies written in a four-part choral style. As can be seen in image 1, these arrangements resembled the structure of Western style

³⁴ Christopher Small, *Music, Society, Education* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2011), 31.

³⁵ R.H. Hamilton, arr. *Cabin and Plantation Songs, as sung by the Tuskegee Singers*. In *Tuskegee: Its Story and Its Songs*, Helen W. Ludlow, ed. (Hampton, VA: Normal School Steam Press, 1884).

³⁶ Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 198; Robert Darden and Bob Darden, *People Get Ready!: A New History of Black Gospel Music* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 75; Burton William Peretti, *Lift Every Voice: The History of African American Music* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 28.

³⁷ William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison, comp., *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: A. Simpson & Co., 1867), v.

hymns. The four-part harmonic structure added to these pieces fundamentally changed the sound and performance of these spirituals not only by stabilizing them into concrete musical keys and time signatures but also by organizing the African style heterophonic melodies into a harmonized European choral arrangement.

While this could be viewed in isolation as a detached musical notation that bore no resemblance to actual performance, the recordings of the Tuskegee Singers by Victor Recordings in 1914 and 1915 show this four-part choral style existed not only in theory but also in practice. With the approval, and most likely the encouragement, of Washington, a troupe of Tuskegee graduates and students recorded approximately twenty African American spirituals with Victor Recordings from June 1914 to September 1915. Performing in various combinations from a quintet and sextet to a double male quartet, the Tuskegee Institute Singers immortalized the style of spiritual popularized by Fisk, copied by Hampton, and immortalized by Tuskegee. In June and August of 1914 and September of 1915, the members, including Alvin J. Neely, Leroy Brown, Charles Edward Clayton, William P. Smith, Alfred Taylor, William Wiley, and William J. Williams, traveled to New York City to record unaccompanied spirituals with a similar harmonic structure to the notated arrangements published by Fisk, Hampton, and Tuskegee. The Tuskegee Singers included many traditional African American characteristics in these recordings including the call-and-response style and vocal embellishments like vocal "slides," but their recordings maintained a European choral structure and are drastically different from what would have been heard in the fields of a Southern plantation.³⁸ Live performances across the country used this same Western style to challenge the prevailing image of the ignorant "darkey" and to project a

³⁸ Recordings and details of these recordings can be found via http://victor.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/talent/detail/23020/Tuskegee_Institute_Singers_Vocal_group (last accessed 20 December 2013)

specific image of Washington's New Negro while also collecting much needed philanthropic dollars so Washington could continue to create the New Negro at Tuskegee.

While historians have claimed these tours were simply fundraising campaigns for Tuskegee, accounts of the tours by financial agents and newspaper reporters illustrate that these tours were valuable as tools to display the sophistication and respectability of Washington's New Negro.³⁹ From 1884 to well after Washington's death, the Tuskegee Singers, a male combination of singers ranging from a trio to a quartet to a quintet and even a double quartet, traveled the country, primarily in the Northeast, to perform as a tool of a major fundraising arm of Washington and Tuskegee. Beginning with Robert Hannibal Hamilton, the vocal teacher at Tuskegee and a former Hampton Singer, the singers toured the states of New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania to raise money for Washington's work at Tuskegee. Washington, however, viewed these Singers as more than simple fundraisers. Writing as early as 1884 to his mentor and principal at Hampton Institute, General Samuel Armstrong, Washington stated that "besides clearing some money" the Tuskegee Singers carried the duty of giving "the school a good advertisement."⁴⁰ Washington viewed the Tuskegee Singers as a public relations tool for himself, Tuskegee, and the African American race. As with all of his endeavors at Tuskegee, Washington viewed himself, Tuskegee, and its students as the public face of the African American race, making the Singers a key part of the projection of Washington's New Negro.

The Isaac Fisher led tours in 1899 and 1900 were typical of the Northern tours by the Tuskegee Singers. Isaac Fisher graduated from Tuskegee in 1897 and had toured earlier with

³⁹ Henry S. Enck, "Tuskegee Institute and Northern White Philanthropy: A Case Study in Fund Raising, 1900-1915," *The Journal of Negro History* 65 (Autumn, 1980), 338.

⁴⁰ Booker T. Washington to Samuel Armstrong, 11 September 1884, in *BTW Papers*, 2:265.

Warren Logan, Booker T. Washington, and Robert H. Hamilton.⁴¹ Fisher's tours with the Tuskegee Quartet highlight that these tours were more than simple funding campaigns; they were public relations campaigns for Washington, Tuskegee, and an entire race. After Robert Hamilton's death while on tour in 1895, other Tuskegee agents, like Warren Logan or Robert W. Taylor, would have taken over the leadership role in the Tuskegee Singers' Northern tours.⁴² Fisher took charge of these tours in July 1899, when he left with the Singers to begin touring. Fisher and the Singers would stay on tour until at least October 1899, possibly early December.⁴³ By August of that year, Fisher, writing Washington from the Catskill Mountains in New York, began complaining about African American musical performances by individuals and groups not associated with Southern black educational institutions that performed "Negro Minstrel" style tunes. We were "defeated," he wrote to Washington, by a "trifling young man" playing minstrels on his guitar. Fisher claimed this man doubly "injured us" by pulling some guests away from Churchill Hall to the steps on the street and repelling other audience members that were "disgusted" by the man and left assuming the man was part of the Tuskegee group. This man was not an isolated complaint from Fisher. "Considering the kind of colored people I am meeting here" and "what they sing," Fisher wrote to Washington, "I am not surprised when the proprietor of a hotel refuses me permission to sing in his hotel."⁴⁴

The pressure to alter the Singers repertoire only increased as white Northerners in Massachusetts requested more "characteristic" tunes and became disappointed that they were not

⁴¹ "Booker T. Washington and the Spirituals."

⁴² It is not completely clear who led the Singers in the interim between Hamilton and Fisher. It is possible, though less likely, that Charles Harris, Hamilton's successor as vocal teacher led the expeditions. There are no indications, however, that Harris ever toured with the singers during his two stints at Tuskegee, but there is evidence that Taylor and Logan toured with the Singers.

⁴³ *Boston Evening Transcript*, 29 July 1899; Isaac Fisher to Booker T. Washington, 25 August 1899, in *BTW Papers*, 5:184; Fisher to Booker T. Washington, 23 October 1899, in *BTW Papers*, 5:242; The group either returned to Tuskegee and then left for New York City with Booker T. Washington or stayed on tour, meeting Washington in New York for a speech in Madison Square Garden. (*New York Times*, 2 December 1899).

⁴⁴ Isaac Fisher to Booker T. Washington, 25 August 1899, in *BTW Papers*, 5:183.

performed. "We are told to our faces often," Fisher wrote to Washington, "they would like us better if we would 'play the Nigger.'" One lady complained they "we don't dare ask you to play the ignorant Darkey." The pressure to change the repertoire forced Fisher to ask Washington what he wanted the Tuskegee Singers to do. "I feel constrained to ask if it is your desire," he asked Washington, "that the quartette shall 'ape' the ignorant characteristics of our people." Fundamentally, Fisher's question sought an answer to whether the Tuskegee Singers were solely on a money making campaign or if they had a larger purpose to combat negative images of African Americans with a more positive and sophisticated image. "Personally," Fisher admitted to Washington, "I am opposed to the continual holding up of our faults for the pleasure of anybody." Fisher refused, pending Washington's approval of course, to cater to white Northerners' "conception of what the Negro ought to be." Instead, he made it his "constant care...to keep the [performances] above the level of Negro Minstrels." Washington and Fisher were of the same mind. Washington replied to Fisher with approval of Fisher's actions; they would not sacrifice their respectable reputation for the benefit of more donations.⁴⁵

The pressure from whites did not end with the selection of tunes. Whites demanded a particular aesthetic they had been conditioned to expect from African Americans. From the early nineteenth century to contemporary black musical performances, Northern whites gained their image of African American culture from minstrel performances.⁴⁶ Indeed, historian Edward Ayers argues 'coon' songs were some of the most widespread songs at the turn of the century in America. Coon songs derived from touring minstrel shows and sought to parody African American slave culture by hyperbolically performing imitations of African American dialect, dancing, singing, and other negative racial stereotypes. While minstrel performances in the North

⁴⁵ Fisher to Booker T. Washington, 23 October 1899, in *BTW Papers*, 5:243-243.

⁴⁶ Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010, 5.

had begun to wane by the late nineteenth century, black vaudeville performances continued the tradition and often borrowed songs and styles from minstrels.⁴⁷ These types of performances, increasingly performed by African Americans, often became the foundation of white American views of African American culture. This image, however, was constructed from views associated with the Old Negro and, if left unchallenged, would prevent the rise of Washington's New Negro image.

Fisher and the Tuskegee Singers had to combat these images and struggled with white expectations of a minstrel aesthetic. Still in Massachusetts in October 1899, white Northern audiences told Fisher Tuskegee would make more money if they would "play the nigger" and include "shouting and mourning" along with their singing.⁴⁸ Fisher and the Tuskegee Singers faced the same requests and demands nearly a year later in New Hampshire. Fisher complained that while three people in the audience may request Tuskegee's refined and Western style plantation songs, "about four score ask that we dance and sing songs which tell of Negroes stealing chickens." "Every day," Fisher wrote in August 1900, "we are made to understand that if there was less refinement about us and more fool, we would do better." More "fool" meant the traditional clapping, dancing, and dialect minstrel tunes that had taught white America who African Americans were. Fisher, however, refused to acquiesce to the racist stereotype. "I make no pretensions to try to please," he wrote Washington.⁴⁹ The Northern tours of Washington's Tuskegee Singers may have had the primary goal of bringing in donations for Tuskegee, but they were designed for the purpose of changing the perception of African Americans.

⁴⁷ Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 376.

⁴⁸ Fisher to Booker T. Washington, 23 October 1899, in *BTW Papers*, 5:242.

⁴⁹ Fisher to Booker T. Washington, 7 August 1900, in *BTW Papers*, 5:592-593.

By the early twentieth century, advertisements and newspaper reports for Washington's Tuskegee Singers and the Tuskegee Band highlighted the sophisticated and respectable performances of these groups. While earlier newspaper reports contained only limited information on the quartet, usually limited to a simple acknowledgement that they performed plantation melodies, advertisements and newspaper reports after the turn of the century were more detailed and focused on the sophisticated performances. Though there is little concrete evidence that Washington affected the reports published in the newspapers, when isolated evidence is combined with Washington's considerable known influence in the media through the "Tuskegee Machine," it seems quite plausible, and likely, that Washington, or at least Washington's agents, had influence in these positive reports of Tuskegee's performances. Regardless of Washington's influence, these reports helped project the image of Washington's respectable New Negro.⁵⁰

Newspapers of all types and from all regions of the United States lauded the Tuskegee Singers' performances. The Kingston *Daily Freeman* advertised a Tuskegee Singer performance in July 1912. They published a two day ad and a follow-up report the day after. Reporting on the performance at Trinity M.E. Church in Kingston, New York, the *Freeman* stated that the Tuskegee Quintet gave a "fair sized audience" a "fine program." "The young men," it continued, "have fine and well cultivated voices."⁵¹ Reports of Tuskegee's "trained...voices" rendering "a most pleasant and...enjoyable evenings entertainment" in the form of plantation melodies performed in an "artistic manner" filled the print media in the last decade of Washington's life.⁵²

⁵⁰ Washington scolded one of his Northern agents for his use of the media in 1913. (Booker T. Washington to N. Clark Smith, 5 June 1913, in *BTW Papers*, 12:194.) For more on Washington's influence on the media see: Donald Gunnig, Rutledge M. Dennis, Myrtle Gonza Glascoe, eds. *The Racial Politics of Booker T. Washington* (San Diego, CA: Elsevier, 2006), 87.

⁵¹ "Tuskegee Quartet to Sing," *The Kingston Daily Freeman*, 16 July 1912; *The Kingston Daily Freeman*, 17 July 1912; "Tuskegee Singers Tonight," *The Kingston Daily Freeman*, 18 July 1912.

⁵² "Westfield's Coolest Hall," *Westfield Republican*, 1 July 1914; *Brockport Republican*, 6 August 1914;

These reports projected the respectable New Negro image to an even larger audience. Readers that failed to attend the performances could learn of the respectable, genteel performances through a discourse of sophistication used by the media.

The newspaper reports from Chautauqua performances around the time of Washington's death offered even more positive publicity for the Tuskegee Singers in the early twentieth century. The *Chester Times* claimed the Tuskegee Institute Singers were "the very best ever," with the "rich harmony of their voices" showing their audiences "what is fine in music."⁵³ A Chicago Chautauqua advertised a performance of the entire Tuskegee Music Department. Sometime between 1906 and 1915, the Mutual Bureau arranged for the Tuskegee Band, Orchestra and Glee Club (the Tuskegee Singers) to perform for a Chautauqua audience in Chicago. The Mutual Bureau honored Tuskegee's musical groups with a full concert program four pages long, complete with pictures of the music organizations, Washington, and Tuskegee's students at work. "Never before," the program read, "has so unique a musical attraction been offered Chautauqua committees." The program presented the Singers as a highly trained and highly selective organization filled with "forty members...selected for their...musical ability, both vocal and instrumental."⁵⁴ Another Illinois Chautauqua in 1915 advertised the Tuskegee Singers as "highly educated, earnest, young college men" with a "reputation of being the best company of colored singers on the road." Chautauquas frequently advertised the Tuskegee Singers in this manner. As John E. Tapia, a scholar of the Chautauqua circuit, argues the Tuskegee Singers were promoted in a way to show that they were "educated and cultured and

⁵³ "Famous Double Quartet Sings," *Chester Times*, 19 August 1914, 3.

⁵⁴ "Tuskegee Institute Band, Orchestra and Glee Club," Chautauqua Brochures, Redpath Chautauqua Collection, University of Iowa Libraries Special Collections.

'safe' for Chautauqua audiences to see and hear."⁵⁵ The Chautauqua advertisements and programs not only show the Tuskegee Singers performing for new audiences but also show that Tuskegee's cultivated and sophisticated performances were beginning to successfully project a respectable image, an image built on Washington's belief that success demanded respect.

Washington's belief that success and sophistication were required to gain respectability caused him to be sensitive to criticism and react quickly to subpar performances by students and agents representing Tuskegee Institute. Washington even demanded agents to stop performing music if he believed the standards he set were not met. Usually, he reached this conclusion through the criticisms of Northern audience members. In October 1908, Washington received such a criticism from Trinity College president and Connecticut state senator Flavel Sweeten Luther. Frank P. Chisholm, a 1902 graduate of Tuskegee, traveled to Hartford, Connecticut on a fundraising trip. While at Trinity College Chisholm spoke about Washington's work at Tuskegee and attempted to take up a collection for the school. Luther informed Washington in an unflattering letter that Chisholm was "not likely to increase the reputation of Tuskegee by his work here in Connecticut." Chisholm, Luther explained, ignored her request to abstain from taking up a collection. In addition, while Trinity's students were captivated by Chisholm's account of Tuskegee's work, Luther was appalled at the "ancient and moth-eaten stories" that according to Luther were over the line and "inappropriate." Chisholm capped the performance by "singing very badly what he called a 'plantation melody.'" Chisholm performed so badly that Luther wrote to Washington that Trinity's students had taken to calling it a "vaudeville performance."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ John E. Tapia, *Circuit Chautauqua: From Rural Education to Popular Entertainment in Early Twentieth Century America* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1997), 101.

⁵⁶ Flavel Sweeten Luther to Booker T. Washington, 26 October 1908, in *BTW Papers*, 9:668.

Washington immediately took action to prevent further damage. In a letter to Chisholm a few days later, Washington detailed a list of improvements Chisholm could make to his presentation to avoid such criticisms. Washington told him to eliminate the extra speech material and stick strictly to his personal story at Tuskegee. "Then follow that up," Washington stated, "with a direct...account of...progress the race is making by reason of the work of the educated men and women throughout the South." After a caution to not tell an old story too often, Washington gave a terse order to Chisholm about the musical portion of his program. "[D]iscard singing before audiences," Washington demanded. "Speaking and singing rarely go well together." He concluded by stating that only "very well trained persons" should be entertaining audiences with vocal music.⁵⁷ Washington obviously did not believe his statement that singing and speaking "rarely go well together." Washington rarely spoke at an event in which a group of singers did not precede him with plantation melodies. Washington's purpose, instead, was to prevent Chisholm from unsuccessful musical performances that hurt the image of Washington, Tuskegee, and the African American race. Washington did not truly mind a speaking and singing combination if the two were done successfully enough to display respectability. Indeed he preferred the combination, but he would not tolerate Chisholm's "vaudeville" style performance to continue because it damaged the respectable image Washington was working to mold.⁵⁸

Five years later Washington made suggestions to Captain Smith about the use and quality of singing in the Tuskegee Band. In June 1913, Washington wrote a letter to Bandmaster Smith advising him of certain changes he wanted made to Smith's musical program. Only six days before Washington had scolded Smith for an original musical piece entitled, "I Am Afraid to Go

⁵⁷ Booker T. Washington to Frank P. Chisholm, 30 October 1908, in *BTW Papers*, 9:672-673.

⁵⁸ For accounts of Washington speaking after singing see: "Accounts of Washington's Tour of Tennessee," 1909, in *BTW Papers*, 10: 200-225; "An Account of Washington's North Carolina Tour," 1910, in *BTW Papers*, 10:463; "An Account of Washington's Tour of Texas," 1911, in *BTW Papers*, 11:331-341.

Home in the Dark,” a piece that included an impersonation of a black man staggering home drunk. Although Washington stated he had “no objection to the music,” he still ordered Smith to eliminate the piece from the program for the negative content.⁵⁹ Six days later Washington ordered him to eliminate the singing in his performances completely. “Please leave out,” he wrote, “the greater part of the singing on the part of the students.” Stating that most people cannot sing and play an instrument well, Washington claimed the poor performances “place us at a disadvantage.” “The singing is disappointing and not good,” Washington stated directly. It “does not represent the best that we can do...Please leave that out.”⁶⁰ Washington’s letter to Smith again illustrates that Washington’s responses to criticism typically focused on ensuring Tuskegee and African Americans were represented positively. Any performance that brought negative associations had to be fixed or eliminated in order to ensure a respectable middle-class image.

The projection of a respectable African American to white America was not Washington’s only goal with respect to the New Negro image. He also sought to make this image a reality by instilling Victorian respectability in his students who would graduate, create their own schools based on the Tuskegee model, and further spread Washington’s doctrine and ideas. By acculturating attributes of Victorian, genteel culture, Washington believed African Americans would slowly gain more respect in society. Music played a key role in this acculturation of white middle-class culture. Tuskegee, tightly controlled by Washington, operated a fully functioning music department from early in the school’s history. The musical organizations affiliated with the schools not only performed for the outside public but consistently provided entertainment for the student and teaching body of the school. These

⁵⁹ Booker T. Washington to N. Clark Smith, 30 May 1913, in *BTW Papers*, 12:192.

⁶⁰ Booker T. Washington to N. Clark Smith, 5 June 1913, in *BTW Papers*, 12:194.

performances, combined with a nearly comprehensive music education program, were part of a cultural indoctrination to aid in the creation of a New Negro in reality.

Tuskegee Institute had an entire course dedicated to providing cultivated entertainment for Tuskegee's students as part of this acculturation. Though the early programs are no longer available, a group of programs from the "Entertainment Course" during the 1910's illustrates a music program and musical entertainment in the vein of Victorian highbrow art. Charles Winter Wood, one of Washington's Northern agents who would travel with the Tuskegee Singers, organized a "Dramatic and Musical Recital" in Tompkins Hall at Tuskegee Institute on July 2, 1910. The program included a combination of opera pieces, classical music, and poetic readings from the late Paul Laurence Dunbar, the writer of the lyrics for the "Tuskegee Song" and the man Washington labeled the "Poet Laureate of the Negro Race."⁶¹ Some of the performance pieces included were "The Flower Song," a piano solo by German composer Gustav Lange, "Fantasia" from the opera *Faust*, and "When Malindy Sings," a poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar. One of the pieces, a poem by Lord Lytton entitled "Aux Italiens," shows the purpose of these entertainments.⁶² They were meant to instill and glorify Victorian highbrow culture. The poem relays the story of a man's lost love rekindled while watching an opera by the Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi.⁶³ Washington used performances such as these to provide his students with life and cultural experiences he deemed vital to a middle-class, respectable lifestyle.

A performance five months earlier was even more explicit as to the purpose and use of these entertainments for the Tuskegee students. On March 4, 1910, students at Tuskegee, female students in particular, were given the opportunity to hear Madame E. Azalia Hackley, a

⁶¹ Anne P. Rice, *Witnessing Lynching: American Writers Respond* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 89.

⁶² "Dramatic and Musical Recital," music program, The Entertainment Course Collection, Folder 3, "Misc. Entertainment Programs, 1910s." Tuskegee Archives.

⁶³ Bliss Carman, ed. *et al*, *The World's Best Poetry* (Philadelphia: John D. Morris & Co., 1904).

classically trained soprano vocalist. The program included a selection from Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Il Trovatore*, the opera that would be referenced five months later in Charles Winter Wood's reading of "Aux Italiens," and classical pieces ranging from European compositions to original compositions by African American composers Harry Burleigh and Tuskegee's own Captain N. Clark Smith. In addition to hearing Hackley's performance, Tuskegee's students had the pleasure of hearing violinist Dr. John Shaw and the twenty-five piece Tuskegee Symphony Orchestra led by Captain Smith.⁶⁴ This performance not only connected African Americans to highbrow music for Tuskegee's students but also connected Tuskegee's own musical organizations to this culture. Through ritualized repetition of these style programs at Tuskegee, Washington hoped to construct in his New Negro a new African American culture that included Victorian highbrow art music ranging from European arrangements of African American spirituals to European musical standards in the classical and opera genres.

While Hackley's performance helped to instill highbrow culture in Tuskegee students, her lecture to Tuskegee's female students even more clearly encouraged Tuskegee's students to adopt middle-class cultural attributes. Hackley's lecture, what she would later call an "impromptu talk," informed the students of the Girl's Department the educational and behavioral prerequisites to become a "respectable woman of class."⁶⁵ Hackley had her own personal motivations in her numerous talks to college women. Hackley no doubt had the same motivations as many African Americans of the upper class with the fame and opportunity to speak to young African Americans, including Booker T. Washington. As she wrote in her compilation of speeches published in 1916, "If I had a daughter," she stated, "I would desire that

⁶⁴ "Recital," music program, The Entertainment Course Collection, Folder 3, "Misc. Entertainment Programs, 1910s." Tuskegee Archives.

⁶⁵ E. Azalia Hackley, *The Colored Girl Beautiful* (Kansas City, MO: Burton Publishing Co., 1916), 9; Jonathan Daniel Wells and Jennifer R. Green, eds., *The Southern Middle Class in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 269.

she...might be a beacon light to her home and to the race.”⁶⁶ The performance and lecture by Madame Hackley for Tuskegee’s students worked in just the same way as the Tuskegee Singers’ performances for Northern whites. Both were musical performances of highbrow art music performed by African American musicians to display an African American connection with Victorian highbrow culture. The only difference being the Northern performances were meant to project an image for whites and the Tuskegee performances were meant to make that image a reality in young blacks.

Hackley frequently toured African American schools, giving not only a musical performance but also lectures and vocal instruction. Hackley’s visit to Tuskegee could even be seen as a precursor to her tour of seventy southern schools in the summer of 1911. On these tours she gave musical performances and lectures, like that given at Tuskegee in spring of 1910. She also organized and led free vocal classes for the students at the schools on the 1911 tour.⁶⁷ Though there is no evidence she led a vocal class at her 1910 Tuskegee visit, her consistent history and dedication to teaching music at Southern African American schools indicates that she most likely gave a vocal workshop for Tuskegee’s students in music courses. Washington certainly would have approved and perhaps even encouraged such a workshop. Washington consistently requested his music teachers improve the singing of the music organizations and the student body as a whole and frequently accepted unique opportunities for his students to improve their musical ability, especially vocally.

Washington even brought in outside influences to help improve the quality of music at Tuskegee by working with Tuskegee’s students on their singing. Hackley’s supposed vocal workshop at Tuskegee was certainly not the first. Four years earlier, in the spring of 1906,

⁶⁶ Hackley, *The Colored Girl Beautiful*, 11.

⁶⁷ Lynn Abbot and Doug Seroff, *To Do This, You Must Know How: Music Pedagogy in the Black Gospel Quartet Tradition* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 26.

Washington brought in a Fisk University faculty member to work with the school on their voices. Washington invited John Wesley Work Jr., a Latin and history teacher at Fisk University who was also responsible for the Fisk Jubilee Singers in the early twentieth century, to come to Tuskegee to improve the singing of the plantation melodies. Work spent three weeks at Tuskegee “training the school in Jubilee music” and working on the overall quality of the school’s singing.⁶⁸ The improvement of singing for the vocal groups destined to tour the country, like the Tuskegee Singers, fit Washington’s desire to project respectability through a display of musical success, but the dedication to improving the singing of the school body as a whole indicates Washington’s larger aspiration to make that projection a reality.

The quality of musical performances was of the utmost importance to Washington because it not only indicated sophistication but it also signified success, which in Washington’s mind would demand respect. In order to ensure Tuskegee’s singing displayed success, Washington demanded his music directors and vocal teachers improve the quality of the music in order to achieve a sophisticated sound to go with the Western style they had chosen. In October 1892 Washington rebuked Hamilton for the quality of the instrumental music department. “Our institution,” he complained, “is entirely too far behind...we shall be compelled to make greater progress.” Part of Washington’s frustration stemmed from the relative lack of an instrumental program at Tuskegee. Tuskegee has “but three or four students...while other institutions have two and three dozens,” he noted.⁶⁹ Washington’s desire for a flourishing instrumental department, which eventually included an orchestra and band with a Western instrumentation,

⁶⁸ *Fisk Herald* (May, 1906).

⁶⁹ Booker T. Washington to Robert H. Hamilton, 4 October 1892, in *BTW Papers*, 3:266.

displays his belief, common of middle-class African Americans, that respectability and sophisticated culture meant appropriating and acculturating into white American culture.⁷⁰

The same was true for Tuskegee's vocal department, but considering the important public face of the Tuskegee Singers improvement of the school's singing held even higher stakes for Washington's New Negro image. In 1884, only three years after the creation of Tuskegee, as Washington planned the first of his Singers' tours, Washington wrote to Armstrong of his disappointment in the first quartet's singing. "I have never been satisfied with the singing," he wrote. While Washington did not doubt Music Director Robert Hamilton's efforts, Washington did doubt Hamilton's ability to bring the singing up to his standards.⁷¹ Not much had changed nearly a decade later, and in Washington's mind the situation had actually worsened. In September 1894, a year before Washington's Atlanta Exposition Speech, Washington chastised Hamilton again for the quality of singing. Washington wanted the "quality and tone of the singing" improved to coincide with the improvements made in the rest of the school. Washington did not want, however, a simple improvement of the African American style. In fact, Washington evidently feared Hamilton would take his request to improve the singing as a sign that he should abandon African American songs like the plantation melodies. Washington made sure to clarify his request by adding that he did not want Hamilton to "discard the plantation songs, but improve the singing of them as well as the other songs."⁷²

The "other songs" were as much the foundation of Tuskegee's music program as the spirituals. Indeed, Tuskegee's music program was constructed from technical studies derived

⁷⁰ Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 223; Bart Landry, *The New Black Middle Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 33-34; Karyn R. Lacy, *Blue-chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 26.

⁷¹ Booker T. Washington to Samuel Armstrong, 16 October 1884, in *BTW Papers*, 2:266.

⁷² Booker T. Washington to Robert H. Hamilton, 23 September 1894, Booker T. Washington Papers, Reel 94, Tuskegee Archives.

from classical pieces, and the course guides in the Tuskegee catalogues contained no references to the spirituals. The foundation of Tuskegee's musical training was classical, not folk in origin. From the beginning of the school, voice courses were required of every student. The course catalogues of Tuskegee show that every student at every level of education took vocal instruction. By the 1887-1888 academic year, however, vocal music was dropped from the senior class program to allow them to focus on other studies before graduation; the other classes still maintained the vocal music course. As Tuskegee grew to over seven hundred students in the early 1890s, the school divided into multiple classes, some of which did not maintain the required vocal instruction as before.⁷³ Tuskegee arranged its course of study as a four-year program. Entering students began in the preparatory class and progressed through the junior class, then middle classes, and finally the senior class. However, due to the large numbers of unprepared students seeking entry to the school, these classes were further divided to include three preparatory classes, the junior class, two middle classes, and the senior classes.⁷⁴ Through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, all of the students continued to receive vocal training with only the two lowest preparatory classes and the senior class exempted. By the time a typical Tuskegee student graduated, that student would have completed nearly three years of vocal training, not counting the training of the entire student body while in Sunday chapel.

This musical training was derived from a classical tradition. The Tuskegee Catalogue from the 1890s lists Charles A. White as the head of the music department and Robert H. Hamilton as the vocal director. White seems to be the one that developed Tuskegee's music program. As a classically trained musician and graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music, White included the *New England Conservatory Method* as the foundational text of the

⁷³ Catalogues of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, 1881-1891, Tuskegee University Archives.

⁷⁴ Max Bennett Thrasher, *Tuskegee: Its Story and Its Work* (Boston: Small, Maynard, & Co., 1901), 54-55.

music program. This text was a piano exercise book that slowly and methodically progressed students to proficiency on the piano. The New England Conservatory of Music developed the book for their own use because the instructors were dissatisfied with the available instruction options.⁷⁵ By the second year studies in music, students began studying harmonic structure and more advanced technical studies, specifically vocal studies. In the third year, students were required to “play piano accompaniments, read vocal music at sight,” and would have had over a year of harmony and music literature study completed. Throughout each year the students were also required to learn and play standard classical operatic and oratorio pieces on piano and voice. By the end of a full course of study in music, students would have mastered vocal techniques, music history and literature, harmonic structure, and rhythmical studies. In addition, music students would have heard and performed classical pieces by composers like Concone, Haydn, and Mozart. More importantly, the students mastered piano, a key factor in musical training at Tuskegee considering it entered into nearly every aspect of the music department.⁷⁶

This foundation of piano instruction is another indication of Washington’s desire to use Tuskegee as a way to instill middle-class values in his students. From the antebellum era the piano was a “leading symbol of middle-class...life.” While the growth of the piano market from 1870 through 1920 meant more working-class families owned pianos, according to James Parakilas, the piano continued to be a symbol of middle-class respectability. “The piano was used in this period,” he argues, “to promote middle-class Western music and cultural values among people who were not middle-class or not Western.”⁷⁷ While Washington is infamous for his critical story of an African American family buying a piano for their daughter while they

⁷⁵ *The New England Conservatory Method for the Piano-Forte: Comprising the First Three Grades of Instruction as Taught at the New England Conservatory of Music, Boston* (Boston: Oliver Ditson & Co., 1870), 3.

⁷⁶ Tuskegee Catalogue, 1893-1894, Tuskegee University Archives.

⁷⁷ James Parakilas, et al, *Piano Roles: A New History of the Piano* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 134, 224, 226.

struggled to provide adequate shelter and food, this story can be misleading if taken too far. Washington was not against ownership or purchase of a piano. Indeed, Washington himself considered buying an organ for Tuskegee's chapel and bought a piano for his own daughter to allow her to further her musical education.⁷⁸ Washington, always the pragmatist, simply believed African American families should have a solid financial foundation before acquiring this superfluous item. This further shows Washington's dedication not only to creating an image of middle-class respectability—which the ownership of a piano would indicate—but also to elevating African Americans to actual middle-class status.

Washington both exhibited and contradicted the typical African American mentality during the Jim Crow Era. Washington's dedication to projecting a positive, respectable image was common of middle-class African Americans. For Washington, as well as many other African Americans, musical performances were key to identifying the African American race with the respectable, genteel, Victorian American culture and status. Unlike many middle-class and elite African Americans, however, Washington embraced the spirituals as a way to project this new identity. As many African American and music scholars have shown, upper class African Americans largely had a disdain for the spirituals. Attempting to express a class consciousness and support class distinctions, African American elites viewed the spirituals as entertainment of the lower classes. Instead, the elites preferred Western style music and classical pieces by composers such as Wagner and Mozart.⁷⁹ For these elite African Americans, the spirituals represented vestiges of the Old Negro that lived in ignorance and slavery. Like

⁷⁸ Booker T. Washington, "The Awakening of the Negro," *The Atlantic Monthly* (1896), 322; Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 119; Booker T. Washington to Andrew Carnegie, 2 February 1907, Andrew Carnegie to Booker T. Washington, 7 February 1907, and Booker T. Washington to Carnegie, 23 February 1907, in *BTW Papers*, 9:209-223.

⁷⁹ Willard Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 116, 197, 283. Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, 167.

Washington, they attempted to project African American sophistication and respectability, but unlike Washington they believed in distancing themselves from the spirituals rather than embracing them.

For many of the African American leaders, however, the spirituals offered an opportunity rather than a disappointment. By identifying themselves as listeners and performers of European classical music, African Americans connected themselves with highbrow culture viewed as the ideal in both America and abroad. Lawrence Schenbeck argues there were two major musical traditions during the Jim Crow Era, blackface minstrelsy and the "European cultivated tradition." Elites of both races in America viewed the latter tradition as a sign of good taste and intelligence. Thus, it is no surprise that African Americans chose to perform European classical music and alter the spirituals to resemble a European four-part choral style.⁸⁰ Washington supported these choral style spirituals as did other prominent African American leaders. African American leaders and musicians such as Harry Burleigh, Monroe Trotter, and Nathaniel Dett, used the spirituals as social performances for white audiences and cultural performances for African Americans. Even Washington's noted rival, W.E.B. DuBois, believed the spirituals were useful as a tool to project a sophisticated African American image. In fact, DuBois, a Fisk University graduate, even acted as business manager for the Fisk Glee Club Quartet before entering Harvard.⁸¹ Washington, like other middle-class and elite African Americans, sought to publicize a new African American image that included sophistication and respectability gained through cultural and social performances of music performed in the European cultivated tradition. As

⁸⁰ Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift and American Music*, 3-7; Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, 166.

⁸¹ James M. Trotter, *Music and Some Highly Musical People* (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1881); Spencer, *New Negroes and Their Music*, 125; Christopher A. Brooks, "The 'Musical' Souls of Black Folk: Can a Double Consciousness be Heard?" in *The Souls of Black Folk: One Hundred Years Later*, ed. Dolan Hubbard (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 269-283.

historian Kevin Gaines argues in *Uplifting the Race*, African American leaders attempted to deliver "portraits of refinement" in the form of "performance rituals."⁸²

Many times, as shown by the Tuskegee tours of the North, these musical performances not only sought to project a new image but also had to combat the still relevant old image. Dozens of southern African American schools sent quartets North for fundraising purposes and some did not have the dedication to the respectable image that Washington and Tuskegee displayed. Desperate for money and willing to bow to white Northern demands, groups like the Dinwiddie Quartet from the John A. Dix Industrial School in Dinwiddie, Virginia stooped to perform minstrels and vaudeville tunes in an attempt to create greater profits.⁸³ As a result, Tuskegee and other African American schools with leaders dedicated to constructing a new positive, respectable image performed a triple duty in the North. One, they desired to collect money to fund Southern African American education; two, they wanted to construct a new respectable image of African Americans in the minds of white and black America; and three, in order to complete number two they had to counter the image being fostered by some of the smaller Southern African American schools and other non-affiliated traveling groups.

Washington and Tuskegee fit squarely within the long tradition of African Americans, specifically Southern African American schools, using music to project and cultivate respectability. Respectability was part of all African Americans' uplift goals and strategies, and these uplift strategies essentially amounted to the projection of a new, more sophisticated African American identity. Southern African American schools collaboratively and independently fostered this new African American identity, each with slightly different ideas about the complete image of the New Negro. For all, the New Negro required an identity that included

⁸² Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 69.

⁸³ Gaines, 186.

respectability. For Washington, this meant a middle-class social and economic status developed through the cultivation of genteel culture, especially musical culture, and the education of a self-help ideology, especially Tuskegee's infamous industrial training. Respectability was the foundation of a much larger, interconnected African American identity Washington sought to project and cultivate. For Washington, one necessary attribute his New Negro had to possess, both as an individual important value and as an essential element of respectability, was character, and by character Washington meant discipline and morality founded in Christianity.

Washington's alma mater, Hampton Institute, like Armstrong, Washington's mother and father figure, Washington believed that "the true objective point in education" was "to build up character."⁴⁰ Washington took this meaning to heart. "Character," he told a New York audience, "makes the man."⁴¹ Washington used a combination of military style discipline, instilled through Tuskegee's industrial education program, and religious morality, established through thorough Christian instruction and mandatory chapel attendance, to craft an image and culture of respectable character for his New Negro. Washington firmly believed the projection and cultivation of discipline and morality would change the name and image of African Americans.⁴² Washington's character education program revolved around the cultivation of religious morality and military discipline. The two combined to provide Tuskegee's students with a disciplined lifestyle and religious morality that Washington sought for his New Negro's image and culture.

Washington clearly relayed to Tuskegee's students the expectations he had for their discipline and morality. "We are compelled to get rid of every student," he told them one Sunday

⁴⁰ Samuel Armstrong quote found in Michael Redford-Yoo, *The Education of Booker T. Washington: American Determinism and the Idea of Race Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 140.

⁴¹ *Schools of Booker T. Washington*, E. Davidson Washington, ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, & Co., 1914).

⁴² Michael Perman and Marshall Hoeman, eds. *Booker T. Washington Redoubled* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2012), 191.

CHAPTER II

"CHARACTER MAKES THE MAN:" CRAFTING A MORAL IMAGE FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

Respectability could not be sustained or validated, however, without displaying and emphasizing moral character in the form of Christianity and Victorian discipline. Washington's character education program at Tuskegee, like most of Tuskegee's elements, was copied from Washington's alma mater, Hampton Institute. Like Armstrong, Washington's mentor and father figure, Washington believed that "the true objective point in education" was "to build up character."⁸⁴ Washington took this teaching to heart. "Character," he told a New York audience, "makes the man."⁸⁵ Washington used a combination of military style discipline, instituted through Tuskegee's industrial education program, and religious morality, established through thorough Christian instruction and mandatory chapel attendance, to craft an image and culture of respectable character for his New Negro. Washington firmly believed the projection and cultivation of discipline and morality would change the status and image of African Americans.⁸⁶ Washington's character education program revolved around the combination of religious morality and secular discipline. The two combined to provide Tuskegee's students with a disciplined lifestyle and religious morality that Washington sought for his New Negro's image and culture.

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⁸⁵ *Selected Speeches of Booker T. Washington*. E. Davidson Washington, ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, & Co., 1932)

⁸⁶ Michael Bieze and Marybeth Gasman. eds. *Booker T. Washington Rediscovered* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 193.

evening, "who is...weak in morals."⁸⁷ Washington believed a strict training in discipline would help fortify his students' character and morality and aid them in achieving and displaying success. "Each individual who wishes to succeed," he told them, must seek out "discipline."⁸⁸ His students endured a strict code of conduct, rules pertaining to dress, and were required to keep a full, punctual schedule. If a student or even teacher was late for meals they were locked out and did not eat, and repeat offenders of these strict Tuskegee rules were expelled from the school. For Washington, a person's punctuality and dress could determine someone's character. "It is surprising," he told his students in one Sunday Evening Talk, "how much we can tell about a person's character by his dress."⁸⁹ Tuskegee's dress code included a military style blue uniform for men and a blue and white combination of shirt and skirt for the female students. Not a button would be allowed out of place and any disheveled look in a student's dress could reap severe consequences. As Max Bennett Thrasher, a reporter with a relationship with Washington, noted, "Untidy hair, unbrushed clothes, dirt, unblackened shoes, a button off or even a button of a coat unfastened" would garner severe punishment for the "unhappy culprit."⁹⁰ This military style discipline fit Tuskegee's character education program, which established a Military Department as early as 1887 to "cultivate habits of order, neatness, and...obedience."⁹¹

The Military Department and military style uniform helped project and cultivate a disciplined, high character image for whites and blacks. This distinguished, even military, physical appearance became the uniform for the Tuskegee Singers and Tuskegee Band as they toured all over the country representing Tuskegee and the African American race. The uniform

⁸⁷ Booker T. Washington, *Character Building: Being Addresses Delivered on Sunday Evenings to the Students of Tuskegee Institute* (New York: Doubleday, Page, & Co., 1903), 16.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁹⁰ Thrasher, *Tuskegee: It's Story and It's Work*, 86.

⁹¹ Catalogue of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, 1897-1898 (Tuskegee, AL: Tuskegee Institute Steam Press Print, 1898), Tuskegee University Archives.

had a profound impact on audiences and visitors to Tuskegee. Rowland Gibson Hazard, a white businessman in Rhode Island, commented on this uniform at a Tuskegee Singer performance in a local church in Peacedale, Rhode Island on July 18, 1898. The uniform had quite a positive effect on Hazard's image of Tuskegee's students and even African Americans as a whole. The quartet, he wrote to Washington, "were a pretty solid looking lot of men" in their blue uniforms. Commenting that they "looked quite military," Hazard indicated that by visual aesthetics alone the Singers looked like the kind of men that could establish "the place of the Negro in our present condition."⁹² Washington used the Tuskegee Singers to display his students' discipline through dress and spiritual music. By singing the religious spirituals in military style uniforms, Washington sought to connect African Americans with morality and disciplined character in the minds of white Northerners.

The ritualized exiting of Tuskegee's chapel services also reinforced disciplinary character within Tuskegee's students. As with the display of Tuskegee's disciplined dress code, music played a key role in organizing the final discipline ritual of each Sunday evening service. After the end of Washington's customary character building talk each Sunday, a piano chord would be struck to grab the attention of the student body. Another would sound to signal for the female students to rise to their feet. At the sound of a musical piece beginning to play the women would turn and begin "marching in step with the music from the orchestra" in rows of two. The women would march from the back of the chapel down the center aisle, across the stage, and back out of the entrance, and the process would repeat for the male students. As the students passed the stage, at least three faculty members, including Washington himself, would inspect the students for dress and body carriage. "Perfect indeed," Thrasher noted, "must be the deportment and dress" of the Tuskegee students to avoid being pulled from line. "The result of this is," Thrasher

⁹² Rowland Gibson Hazard to Booker T. Washington, 18 July 1898, in *BTW Papers*, 4:449.

stated, "that one will see nowhere a neater or more neatly dressed company of young people than the students at Tuskegee Institute." This powerful display and education of character was not lost on visitors, and was not meant to be. "I am impressed by the philosophy of it all...I never saw its like before," noted one prominent white visitor whom Thrasher credited with being "thoroughly" familiar with "Negro character."⁹³ These discipline rituals were designed to instill a specific, respectable style of dress and character within Tuskegee's students, but these rituals were meant for the white public as much as they were for the students. Washington designed every element of Tuskegee to be a two-way mirror. While the character education program was certainly designed as cultural performances to cultivate character through physical appearance, it also acted as a social performance for white Americans to observe African American character through displays of discipline.

Tuskegee's religious training added a moral focus to Washington's character education program. Through Christian religious training Washington attempted to instill a religious morality into his students to combat the negative image African Americans received from minstrelsy and news reports.⁹⁴ Washington, copying the system at his old school Hampton Institute, used the industrial education philosophy as a way to instruct his students in Christian morality. Like his mentor Samuel Armstrong, Washington believed industrial education included a "quasi-religious principle, for the salvation of the Negro race," what Michael Rudolph West has called a "church of industrial education."⁹⁵ For Washington, morality and character were intimately connected with religion, specifically the Christian religion, and he incorporated character and morality as an intimate piece of the crafting of his New Negro. Washington firmly

⁹³ Thrasher, *Tuskegee: Its Story and Its Work*, 85-86.

⁹⁴ For more on this criminal image and African American attempts to counter it see: Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 124.

⁹⁵ Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856-1901* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 64; West, 193.

believed character and religion had the power to influence mass behavior, and instilling an appreciation and dedication to Christian morality and character was a key feature of Tuskegee and Washington's educational and uplift philosophies.⁹⁶

"We want to have you learn to see and appreciate," he told his students in one of his Sunday Evening Talks, "the practical value of the religion of Christ."⁹⁷ This dedication to religious training at Tuskegee stemmed from Washington's belief that Christianity needed "a more definite means of connection with the social and moral life of the Negro people." A religious connection to African Americans, Washington believed, would give a much needed moral imperative to the African American uplift movement. Christianity, Washington claimed in his most famous writing on religion, "would give to the movement for the upbuilding of the race the force...of a religious motive." Washington hoped and believed this religious training would translate into a more moral African American populous that sought to live a life of high character. Through repeated Christian exercises, Washington sought to instill an identity with high character in African Americans, thus creating a more positive perception of African American morality. Washington used religion as the major part of his character education program at Tuskegee and stressed its importance in uplifting the race to his students and America. "The great task of uplifting the race," he wrote, "is a work of religion."⁹⁸

For Washington, this Christianity had to complement the Victorian respectability he sought to project by adding to the image of the civilized new African American. In a speech to a New York audience Washington illustrated how important Christianity was to building and projecting respectability and character. "The men doing vital things of life are those who read the

⁹⁶ Bieze, *Booker T. Washington Rediscovered*, 193. Booker T. Washington, *Eighteenth Annual Report*, (1899), 5; Brundage, *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress*, 110.

⁹⁷ Washington, *Character Building*, 228.

⁹⁸ Booker T. Washington, "The Religious Life of the Negro," *North American Review* 181 (July, 1905), 22-23.

Bible and are Christians," he stated. The "Negro who does the shooting, he added, "is...without Christian training."⁹⁹ Washington consistently used this type of message in his speeches and writings as a way to connect African Americans to the moral character associated with Christianity and to take that connection to display African American progress to America. "What indisputable progress," Washington asked in an article entitled "Fifty Years of Negro Progress, has the Negro made...along intellectual, moral, [and] social" lines? His answer included the dramatic increase in "church buildings, halls and parsonages," which Washington linked not only to economic progress but also moral and religious progress. He claimed the investment of over sixty-one million dollars in Church property displayed "not only economic progress, but it denotes, also, a continuing and increasing devotion to his religious life."¹⁰⁰ Religious progress meant as much to the African American image as economic progress, even for the business minded Washington.

From early on in Washington's education and leadership, he found religious leadership lacking in the African American community. After graduating from Hampton Institute, Washington attended Wayland Seminary. At Wayland Washington became more religious but ever more critical of organized religion and the religious leadership.¹⁰¹ Washington continued to critique the African American religious leadership for being uneducated, lazy, and morally deficient. In 1890, Washington claimed between sixty and seventy-five percent of the Baptist and Methodist ministers in the African American communities were "unfit, either mentally or morally, or both." In the same piece for the *Christian Union*, Washington recounted an anecdote of one Tuskegee Baptist church that contained eighteen ministers for only two-hundred

⁹⁹ "An Account of a Speech in Columbus, Ohio," 24 May 1900, in *BTW Papers* 5:544.

¹⁰⁰ Booker T. Washington, "Fifty Years of Negro Progress: Some Indisputable Evidence." *Forum* 55 (Jan.-June, 1916), 270-272.

¹⁰¹ Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader*, 97-99.

members. When asked why they became ministers, Washington stated they claimed it was "because they didn't like the hard-work of the fields." Laziness only began the diatribe Washington wrote about the African American ministry in the South. Washington claimed most of these so-called Christian ministers were so immoral and corrupt that they only cared about the salary they could derive from being a minister. "Most of the church service," Washington recounted, "seems to revolve itself into an effort to get money." The local members of the community rarely trusted a minister from their own community. The locals "mistrust them most in matters of finance and general morality," Washington wrote in his scathing article. To compound matters, Washington argued that many of these ministers are unfit for theological studies when they leave for seminary. A "discouragingly small number enter these seminaries," Washington wrote of the Southern African American ministers, "and a very small proportion of those entering graduate."¹⁰² This lack of morality, mental preparation, and work ethic caused Washington to doubt African Americans' religious education in the African American church.

"With such spiritual leaders," he wrote, "the mere fact that so large a proportion of the seven million colored people in the South are church members is misleading." Indeed, Washington believed "that a large proportion of these church members" were "just as ignorant of true Christianity...as any people in Africa or Japan."¹⁰³ For Washington, this "true Christianity" was one that aided rather than hindered African Americans' uplift and assimilation into mainstream American culture, and this meant adopting the more Victorian religious attitude by eliminating the overt emotionalism in religious services. "The members of the Negro race," Washington stated, "must be taught that mere religious emotion that is guided by no definite idea

¹⁰² Booker T. Washington, "The Colored Ministry: Its Defects and Needs," *Christian Union*, 14 August 1890, 199.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

and is devoted to no purpose is vain.”¹⁰⁴ Washington firmly believed, however, that a deep emotional connection with God was not only necessary but desirable. “I, for one, hope that he [the Negro] will always retain in a large degree the emotional element in religion,” Washington wrote in *The Future of the American Negro*.¹⁰⁵ But for Washington, this emotionalism was to be relegated to a personal rather than public display of spiritualism. Washington claimed that the “most moral and religious men...have their religion and morality modified” by the American “whose religion is a mere matter of emotionalism.”¹⁰⁶ Religion, while necessary, could only be uplifting if it fit certain criteria. Washington believed the “true Christianity” was one that improved African Americans’ morality and work-ethic while maintaining African Americans’ middle-class respectability.

Washington did not simply complain about the issue of emotionalism and sub-par religious leadership in his writings; he dedicated Tuskegee Institute to combating the image of the overly emotional, even primitive, style of Christianity still relevant in many southern African American churches. Washington’s dedication to respectable Christianity was made evident when Isaac Fisher asked if he should begin to copy the “shouting and mourning so largely characteristic of the religious meetings” in the southern African American church. Mimicking these performances, Fisher claimed, would lead to more donations while on tour because it was what the white public desired to see from African American singers performing the spirituals. Washington decided to refuse to succumb to these calls to mimic the emotional characteristics of African American religious services to make more money with the Tuskegee Singers on tour.¹⁰⁷ Washington’s refusal displayed a dedication to respectable Christianity over the more profitable

¹⁰⁴ Washington, “The Religious Life of the Negro,” 22.

¹⁰⁵ Booker T. Washington, *The Future of the American Negro* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1902), 173.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁰⁷ Isaac Fisher to Booker T. Washington, 23 October 1899, in *BTW Papers*, 5:242.

emotional entertainment. To further combat this public emotionalism and deficient religious leadership, Washington created a Bible training and character education program at Tuskegee. Students entering Tuskegee seeking to preach were required to complete a thorough academic curriculum and all students, regardless of track, were required to adhere to strict religious and disciplinary codes.

It was in these Bible training and character education programs that music played an omnipresent role in shaping and instilling respectable Christian character into his students. The Phelps Bible School had many of the same features one would expect to find in a theological studies program. It had courses in biblical history, names, literary and interpretive accounts of the Bible, analysis of the Gospels, Biblical geography, and Hebrew. It even included a ten lecture course each quarter that covered everything from the authenticity of the Bible to the relevance of the Bible's teachings to future generations. Interestingly, however, the course had one aspect, besides the Bible, that appeared throughout a Phelps Bible School student's educational career at Tuskegee: music. Throughout the Bible School course students were educated in hymns and singing.¹⁰⁸ While there is no evidence to verify that this singing included spirituals, it is very likely considering Washington's affinity for them and his connection of the spirituals with early African American Christianity. "The plantation songs," he wrote for a collection of European arranged spirituals, "are the spontaneous outburst of intense religious fervor, and had their origins in the camp meetings, the revivals and in other religious exercises."¹⁰⁹ Washington definitely associated music and singing with a complete religious education and most likely associated that singing and music with the spirituals. This is even more evident when one studies Washington's mandatory Chapel services.

¹⁰⁸ Catalogue of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, (Tuskegee, AL: Normal School Steam Press, 1895), Tuskegee University Archives.

¹⁰⁹ Booker T. Washington, "Preface," in *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies*, arr. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, ix.

The typical mandatory Chapel service at Tuskegee can be illustrated with an account by Max Bennett Thrasher, a journalist frequently hired by Washington who purportedly served as a ghostwriter for some of Washington's articles.¹¹⁰ Washington required Chapel service attendance of all students and teachers at Tuskegee every Sunday evening. At 8:20, precisely, because Washington did not tolerate unpunctuality, the Victorian, respectable service would begin. Every pain was taken to ensure the appearance of respectability and morality. Male and female students, over one-thousand of them by 1901, were separated into different sections. On stage sat Tuskegee's teachers, facing the students, with a one-hundred voice choir standing behind them in the gallery. The "lofty, spacious church" and its students waited for Washington and vocal director Charles G. Harris to begin the service. The services began with music, almost always spirituals accompanied by piano, organ, or the Tuskegee Symphony Orchestra, after which a prayer and sermon were given. After the sermon, which included a Bible selection and recitation by the school body, more music and singing of spirituals by the choir and student body would follow. These spirituals were more than simple entertainment, if for no other reason than Washington took religion very seriously. They were integral parts of each religious Chapel service. There "is hardly ever a service," writes Max Bennett Thrasher, "at which one or more of these in not sung." Frequently, Washington would request for new students to teach the student body a new spiritual during the service, and time would be taken for the entire student body to learn the tune.¹¹¹

These spirituals were sung in the same manner as the Tuskegee Singers touring in the North, and Washington was equally interested in the quality and selection of music. Washington

¹¹⁰ Michael Bieze, *Booker T. Washington and the Art of Self-Representation* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008), 20. Bieze even argues Thrasher ghostwrote Washington's famous autobiography, *Up From Slavery*.

¹¹¹ Thrasher, *Tuskegee: Its Story and Its Work*, 82-84.

reprimanded his vocal director, Charles G. Harris, in 1897 for not playing the spirituals in the manner he requested. "The plain fact," he wrote to Harris, "is that the plantation singing is not being practiced and used in the way that the policy of the school requires." Part of this policy Harris was violating was Washington's desire for at least one-third of the public musical selections to be spirituals. Washington, however, was specifically angered by the lack of spirituals in chapel services. "There is almost no plantation singing in the chapel," Washington complained to Harris, "except when I make a personal request for it."¹¹² Indeed, Washington and the music directors frequently discussed the need for more "books" for the student body so they could all sing the same way, and the choir was frequently drilled and taught, not just to sing for visitors but also to lead the student body in these Europeanized spirituals.¹¹³ Washington tolerated no displays of inefficiency or ineptitude during the singing in Chapel services. On one occasion, Washington severely reprimanded a teacher filling in for the vocal director, Mr. Hamilton, for the first time. Evidently, the young man did not find a specific spiritual Washington desired to sing quickly enough in the book. Washington enjoyed the spirituals as a musical feature, but he also viewed them as a character building tool to be used in chapel services at Tuskegee. As he wrote for Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's arrangements of them, "The music songs goes to the heart because it comes from the heart."¹¹⁴ Washington knew they were valuable character building, spiritual tunes and made sure he informed his students of their value as well.

After the sermon and the singing of the spirituals, Washington would stand to give his customary Sunday Evening Talks. These talks, given every Sunday evening at the end of the service, were designed as messages for "building up the character" of his students, teachers, and his race. Washington, in an edited collection of these talks, claimed he felt that he was not

¹¹² Booker T. Washington to Charles G. Harris, 22 May 1897, in *BTW Papers*, 4:281-282.

¹¹³ Booker T. Washington to Charles G. Harris, 22 April 1899, in *BTW Papers*, 5:90.

¹¹⁴ Washington, "Preface," ix.

speaking just to his students but that “I was speaking to a large proportion of the coloured people in the South.” Thanks to the wide distribution of Tuskegee’s newspaper, in which many of these talks were published, Washington’s character building talks could affect the masses rather than just his students. Washington gave addresses on all topics related to character building, like “Character as Shown in Dress” or “Influencing By Example,” but his talk on the spirituals perfectly captured Washington’s belief in character, respectability, and using music as a display and educational tool for both. “There is no part of our chapel exercises,” Washington told his students in a talk entitled “Sing the Old Songs,” “that gives me more pleasure than the beautiful Negro melodies which you sing.” Washington even claimed that “there is not part of the service more truly spiritual” or “more elevating.”¹¹⁵ Songs, specifically the spirituals, were more than secular tools to illustrate respectability; they were religious tools that Washington believed demonstrated a fervent spirituality, and he used them to encourage that moral spirituality in his students. “Those beautiful, weird, quaint, sweet melodies,” he told his students, contained a simplicity and purity that they should cherish and never fail to preserve. “If you go out to have schools of your own,” which many of them did, “have your pupils sing them as you have sung them here, and teach them to see the beauty which dwells in these songs.”¹¹⁶ Washington taught his students, who became “Little Booker T. Washingtons” establishing numerous “Little Tuskegees” all over the South, to cherish the spirituals as songs of spirituality and respectability. After the Sunday Evening Talks, Tuskegee’s students completed one last ritual to instill character. This ritual, however, involved less religious undertone and was more of a cultivation of discipline.

¹¹⁵ Washington, *Character Building*, 251.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 251-253.

Nowhere is the latter more evident than at Tuskegee's commencement exercises. The commencement ceremonies were important public events for all African American schools, especially in the South. Prominent local southern whites were guests of honor and national newspapers often had coverage of these special events at major African American schools like Fisk, Tuskegee, and Hampton. Historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage argues that in "shared spaces" like commencements "blacks had to be careful when asserting claims to status," but they also were prime spaces in which to refute racial stereotypes. These "ritualized" ceremonies offered African Americans a stage to display and highlight the attributes they wanted whites to see and associate with the race.¹¹⁷ For Washington, Tuskegee's commencements offered an opportunity to project a respectable, Christian identity to prominent white visitors and Americans all over the country thanks to wide newspaper coverage of these events each year. Music and the Tuskegee musical organizations played an important role in displaying these attributes to reporters and visitors.

Max Bennett Thrasher, in an article for the Boston *Evening Transcript* in June 1902, wrote a detailed account of Tuskegee's commencement, illustrating the importance music and Tuskegee musicians had in these events. Commencements at Tuskegee were held in the Chapel, the most grand and elegant building on campus, itself a sign to visitors of Tuskegee's emphasis in its education program. As the graduates were completing their graduate walk to the Chapel, Bennett described a packed Chapel that was standing-room only with still "too many outside wishing to get in." Indeed, as the graduates neared the Chapel those packed inside could hear the Tuskegee Band leading them on their walk. Bennett, his seat at the reporter's table secure, left to watch the procession. The band led four columns of graduates, teachers, and alumni, until it

¹¹⁷ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 78-79, 89.

reached the Chapel. At this point the band ceased to play and the graduates and band split to allow the alumni and teachers to walk through to their seats. Bennett remarked that "this part of the ceremony...is always accorded the more impressive tribute of perfect silence."¹¹⁸ In essence, this march to the Chapel displayed Tuskegee's musical, physical, and mental discipline through the marching band's playing, the perfect marching lines of graduates, and the mental discipline to maintain perfect silence as the hundreds of teachers and alumni took their seats. Inside the Chapel, in the gallery behind the platform, stood over one-hundred and twenty-five choir members, "with an organ and a piano and an orchestra to accompany them." Any visitor must have known from this impressive sight that they were in for a program filled with music.

The musical performance Tuskegee put on during this commencement, and likely every commencement, followed a script that displayed a well-organized, disciplined, and religious identity for Tuskegee's students. As the vocal director raised his baton, the choir stood in obedience, waiting for the signal to begin. When the leader began the song the one-hundred and twenty-five voice choir began to sing the "Hallelujah Chorus."¹¹⁹ The choice of music is specific; the Hallelujah Chorus is a European classical piece by the famous composer George Handel. Handel's Hallelujah Chorus allowed Washington's Tuskegee Choir to display their singing prowess, their respectability, and religiosity within the same piece. Tuskegee had to be very careful not to take their projection of cultivation too far. One reporter next to Bennett commented that the singing was "fine...but I'd like to hear them sing some of their own songs." The unnamed reporter feared they were being "educated out of their" own culture and music. No sooner had he registered the complaint than the chorus began singing the spiritual "Give Me That Old Time Religion." Sung in an unaccompanied, call-and-response style, but still with the four-

¹¹⁸ Max Bennett Thrasher, "A Novel Commencement," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 21 June 1902, 28.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

part arrangement, this piece allowed Washington and Tuskegee to challenge white stereotypes while also maintaining the rigid racial code of acceptability. Having assured Southern whites of the ability and willingness to sing "their own songs," the Tuskegee Choir immediately returned to the classical, religious European pieces. Accompanied by an organ, a sign of respectability much like the piano, the Choir sang *Inflammatu et Accensus*, a classical piece by Gioachino Rossini.¹²⁰ The choices of these pieces were more than an attempt to project a cultivated, highbrow musical taste. They were chosen to display a taste for highbrow religious music. The entire commencement sought to project African Americans as respectable, middle-class Christians.

This projection, however, was not just for prominent white visitors to Tuskegee. Washington used Christianity and music to cultivate a lifelong and public expression of African American spirituality. Washington's ultimate goal was to cultivate Christianity, character, and respectability into his students' identity and send them out to be leaders by example of the New Negro in the South. "We are seeking to imbue these young men," he wrote, "with the feeling that the great task of uplifting the race...is a work of religion" so that they would go "forth as leaders of their people." Washington envisioned his graduates, having "been fortified at Tuskegee by...Christian character," as the "centre of influence and light" among southern African Americans. As Washington told his students explicitly, his religious character education program was the foundation of Tuskegee's mission to train "leaders" to "live among the masses" and "influence...all whom you will come in contact" and "show them how to lift themselves up."¹²¹

Tuskegee has been described by scholars as a city on a hill for African American education

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Washington, "The Religious Life of the Negro, 23; Washington, "The Awakening of the Negro," 324; Washington, *Character Building*, 229.

during the progressive era.¹²² Like Tuskegee, Washington desired for his students to become spiritual, moral, educational, and business leaders of their community. Through his character education program Washington desired for his graduates to become human cities on hills throughout the South, building a solid reputation not just for Tuskegee but for the entire African American race. Washington believed that displays of moral character would have positive impacts on the race's image and thus, over time, improve race relations in the South to a foundation of mutual respect.

Washington's belief in religion as a social tool for the uplift of African Americans was part of a larger African American movement during the Progressive era. In this era of societal improvements, reformers, especially race leaders like Booker T. Washington, believed religion could be used to socially improve America through Christian teachings. Social Gospel advocates preached a nondenominational message that avowed to help the mass of poor.¹²³ This form of social Christianity and its advocates believed "the wrongs of society can be righted and that the ideals of society can be realized."¹²⁴ African American racial leaders found this movement particularly useful because social Christianity addressed more than the salvation of humanity; it "addressed the total life experience: political, social, and spiritual." This movement was for the moral improvement of society. As Kenneth H. Hill argues, African American race leaders that used the Social Gospel viewed it as "social salvation."¹²⁵ Through religious teachings adherents to the Social Gospel sought to socially improve America, eradicating the social ills of society, including racial prejudice.

¹²² Virginia Lantz Denton, *Booker T. Washington and the Adult Education Movement* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 86; Ellen Weiss, *Taylor and Tuskegee: An African American Architect Designs for Booker T. Washington* (Montgomery, AL: New South Books, 2012), xv.

¹²³ George Armstrong Kelly, *Politics & Religious Consciousness in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 153.

¹²⁴ *The Social Gospel* (February, 1898), 3.

¹²⁵ Kenneth H. Hill, *Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2007), 61.

Washington and Tuskegee's religious training program had many connections to this movement. In 1898, a couple members of the Christian Commonwealth of Georgia, the publishers and creators of the *Social Gospel* magazine, visited Tuskegee and noted "inspiring Christianity" that had cultivated "respecting character that marks a high order of useful citizenship."¹²⁶ Washington even had many of the adherents of the Social Gospel come to his aid after being attacked in the media by southern whites for his dinner visit with President Theodore Roosevelt in the White House in 1903. By the turn of the century, Washington had become not only the leader of the African American uplift but also of American social Christianity.¹²⁷ "More than any other man," the *Social Gospel* commented in 1901, "he is helping to solve the race problem in the South."¹²⁸ Washington and advocates of the Social Gospel agreed on many philosophies including the use of music as an important tool of religious instruction. "Don't die with your best music in you," the *Social Gospel* published in April 1901. A couple of months later the *Social Gospel* praised John Sullivan Dwight, nineteenth century music critic, for introducing the "genius of music" to his Unitarian church and displaying "everything that was best in this realm of art."¹²⁹ Washington's religious training at Tuskegee sought to instill a Social Gospel style of respectable Christianity. Like other adherents within Social Gospel Movement, Washington believed the cultivation of this style of Christianity would improve race relations, and like Washington at Tuskegee, advocates of the Social Gospel believed music played a key role in this cultivation.

Washington had even more concrete connections with the use of music within the Social Gospel Movement. Washington created a relationship with powerful Social Gospel minister

¹²⁶ *The Social Gospel* (February, 1898), 21-22.

¹²⁷ Ralph E. Luker, *Social Gospel in Black and White: American Racial Reform, 1885-1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 141.

¹²⁸ *The Social Gospel* 36 (February 1901), 23.

¹²⁹ *The Social Gospel* 41 (July, 1901), 6.

Henry Hugh Proctor, minister of the First Congregational Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Proctor, like Washington, used music as a way to project and cultivate respectable Christianity within the African American race. He used Westernized spirituals as part of the music repertoire at the First Congregational Church and was the founder and a board member of the Atlanta Colored Music Festival. This music festival became a display of a New Negro mentality, one that Washington fully endorsed. Like Washington's use of classical music and spirituals to project an image of respectability and Christianity, the Colored Music Festival sought African American performers to perform Europeanized spirituals in order to project a positive, new image of African Americans to whites through music.¹³⁰ A scholar of the Colored Music Festival, Gavin James Campbell, argues, "blacks hoped to demonstrate that the spiritual's transformation from vernacular hymnody to art song paralleled the race's swift rise from slavery and demonstrated its limitless potential."¹³¹ Washington used and contributed to the image Proctor and other Social Gospel advocates were cultivating through the Atlanta Colored Music Festival. Indeed, Washington had the Tuskegee Singers and Tuskegee Band perform at the First Congregational Church and the Colored Music Festival on numerous occasions.¹³²

The discipline rituals and religious rituals at Tuskegee were meant to cultivate a solid foundation of moral and social character through religion and discipline. Washington, like many adherents of the Social Gospel, used music to organize, implement, and display the character of the New Negro. Music represented the most spiritual part of the religious services and acted as an organizing tool in teaching and representing Tuskegee students' discipline. With a fervent

¹³⁰ Spencer, *The New Negroes and Their Music*, 124

¹³¹ Gavin James Campbell, *Music and the Making of a New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 69.

¹³² "Booker Washington Speaks Wednesday," *Atlanta Constitution*, 9 January 1910, 5; "Tuskegee Night at A Colored Church," *The Atlanta Georgian and News*, 3 September 1910, 12; "Tuskegee Band Plays for Atlanta Negroes," *Atlanta Constitution*, 15 January 1911, A5; "Tuskegee Band Will Give Street Parade," *The Atlanta Georgian and News*, 11 February 1911, 8; "Tuskegee Band Will Arrive This Afternoon," *Atlanta Constitution*, 22 March 1912, 8; "Spectacular Effects Will Mark Negro Music Festival," *Atlanta Constitution*, 7 July 1912, 6.

social gospel belief in religion and character as social tools that "would lead to permanent change for blacks," Washington devised and implemented a system of character education to challenge prevailing stereotypes of the ignorant, immoral Negro by educating his students to inhabit and exhibit a life of high character through Christian morality and Victorian discipline. This respectable, Christian New Negro Washington was creating at Tuskegee was a leader by example. Whether his New Negro Tuskegee graduate became a minister, teacher, principal, or a rural farmer, Washington wanted his graduates to set an example for their African American community and be an example of the New Negro for the white American community. However, Washington also believed his New Negro should be a part of a specific community. When creating and projecting his New Negro's identity, Washington made clear that he believed the African Americans' future was in the South.

¹⁰ Venable, *The Art of the Possible*, 24, 39, 67.

CHAPTER III

"TUSEGEE, THOU PRIDE OF THE SWIFT GROWING SOUTH:" CONSTRUCTING A SOUTHERN
IDENTITY FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

The construction of Washington's New Negro image required an affirmation of qualities and reaffirmation of identity for society, but Washington also sought to create this New Negro in reality. As a result, Washington sought to cultivate positive qualities and instill a specific identity into the African American race through Tuskegee's students. Respectability and character gave Washington's New Negro the necessary positive attributes required to create and project an image to challenge the Old Negro plantation image. It still required, however, the cultivation of a regional, racial, and national identity. Like the attributes designed to counter the prevailing stereotypes in American culture, Washington attempted to instill identities that would counter contemporary political and cultural trends that Washington believed posed a threat to African American uplift. In response to African American migration patterns, and due to the perilous location of most African American educational institutions, Washington attempted to instill a Southern identity into his students and project a Southern identity to American whites, particularly Southern whites. While historians have largely seen Washington's desire of a Southern identity for African Americans as a survival strategy or an accommodation to white racism, Washington's actions indicate a more complicated motive.¹³³ Washington sought to instill a Southern identity because, due to his Jeffersonian mentality, he genuinely believed a Southern, rural identity was the only way his New Negro would prosper.

¹³³ Verney, *The Art of the Possible*, 34, 39, 67.

Washington believed the only hope African Americans had at progress and establishing a new, post-slavery life in America resided in the South, specifically among southern whites. From the beginning of Tuskegee's establishment, Washington expressed his belief that if the African American race were to prosper it would do so with the help of the southern whites. "Any movement for the elevation of the Southern Negro," Washington stated in July of 1884 at the National Educational Association (NEA) meeting in Madison, Wisconsin, "must have...the cooperation of the Southern whites."¹³⁴ Southern white support offered the only path to African American uplift, and Washington knew he needed this support to ensure the survival of his New Negro. Washington's New Negro was built from Washington's own personality. As Houston Baker has shown in *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, a key piece of Washington's public persona was the "minstrel mask" meant to facilitate his "master of form." This mask and form were part of survival tactics within the racially contentious South.¹³⁵ Southern African Americans were caught in a delicate play in which to "survive was to accommodate, to wear the mask." The "mask" allowed African American leaders like Dr. Washington to subtly challenge racial discrimination and operate to uplift African Americans while avoiding the suicidal tactic of direct agitation. As Leon Litwack argues, African Americans in the Jim Crow South were taught by experience that "misreading or misplaying a role might cost them their lives."¹³⁶ Washington understood direct contention would not lead to African American uplift, and as a result, he decided that cooperation offered the best opportunity for African Americans. If his New Negro was to help create "permanent improvement" for the African American race,

¹³⁴ Booker T. Washington, "The Educational Outlook in the South," An Address Delivered Before the National Educational Association, Madison, Wisconsin, 16 July 1884, in Henry J. Perkinson, *Two Hundred Years of American Educational Thought* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 193.

¹³⁵ Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 240-243.

¹³⁶ Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998),

Washington knew his New Negro needed "to live friendly and peaceably with his white neighbors both socially and politically."¹³⁷

Convinced that "no effort" made by African Americans to uplift the race would succeed without "the Southern white man's support," Washington attempted to garner that support through the creation and projection of a southern identity.¹³⁸ Washington believed linking African Americans to a southern identity and Southern prosperity offered the only path to garner this aid of southern whites. Washington created this link through professions that the future of the South, black and white, was tied to positive race relations and the reciprocal benefits African Americans and southerners gained from their Southern lives together. The "Negro is one of the great natural resources" of the South, Washington claimed, and this benefit African Americans could provide the South made "the prosperity of the South" intimately tied to African Americans.¹³⁹ Washington believed integrating African Americans into the narrative of southern progress would encourage southern whites to help African Americans progress. "If Negro labor is to become more efficient," he told an audience in 1914, "every effort should be made to encourage rather than discourage the Negro in his ambition to go forward." Claiming African Americans were vital to the Southern economy, he encouraged southerners to encourage help African Americans settle permanently in the South. It would be to the South's benefit, Washington claimed, for southern whites to encourage African Americans "to buy land and plant himself permanently on the soil."¹⁴⁰ Washington hoped linking African Americans to southern prosperity would convince southern whites of how vital African Americans were to the progress of the South.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 195.

¹³⁸ Washington, *My Larger Education*, 23-24.

¹³⁹ Booker T. Washington, "Rural Negro and the South," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction* (Fort Wayne, IN: Fort Wayne Printing Co., 1914), 123.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 123.

Washington reinforced this link by claiming African Americans were positive members of southern society by highlighting their contributions to southern culture and southern life. Projecting and cultivating a southern identity required validating African Americans' southern credentials, and Washington attempted to do this by proving African Americans' loyalty to the South. Washington's Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition speech in 1895, known as his "Atlanta Compromise" speech, propelled him to national fame and has become one of the most infamous speeches not only in Washington's history but American history. Largely viewed as an "accommodation" to southerners, Washington outlined his path to peaceful race relations in the South.¹⁴¹ In his 1895 speech Washington attempted to prove African Americans' were southerners by highlighting their loyalty to the South. "[W]e have proved our loyalty," he claimed, and "in the future...we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach."¹⁴² Washington understood the southern white mind, and he may even have been consciously tapping into the South's Lost Cause mentality regarding the Old Negro. Regardless, Washington clearly designed the message to appeal to the Southern elite's desire for the image of the loyal Old Negro. Washington built on this loyal image stating that "the Negro would be among the first to come to the rescue" and were "ready to lay down their lives" to defend the South from a foreign invasion.¹⁴³ By emphasizing African Americans' willingness to defend the South, Washington hoped to confer a Southern identity, even an inferior one, to African Americans.

¹⁴¹ Dickson D. Bruce, *Black American Writing from the Nadir: The Evolution of a Literary Tradition, 1877-1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 56; Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York: Penguin Group, 2001), 41; Marlese Durr, ed. *The New Politics of Race: From Du Bois to the 21st Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2002), 11; Michael Rudolph West, *The Education of Booker T. Washington: American Democracy and the Idea of Race Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 26.

¹⁴² "The Standard Printed Version of the Atlanta Exposition Address," 18 September 1895, *BTW Papers*, 3:583.

¹⁴³ Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 172-173; "Atlanta Exposition Address," *BTW Papers*, 3:583.

Washington also used culture as a way to connect African Americans with the South and southern whites. "I do not believe the Southern people will ever find," he stated, "a people who are able and willing to adapt themselves to the habits, traditions and the ambition of the southern people as the Negro has done."¹⁴⁴ He used this to project an image that African Americans were southern and had adapted to southern culture through centuries of living in the South and their acculturation of southern culture made them southerners. He clarified this belief that African Americans were "no less Southerners than their white neighbors" to a Tennessee audience of prominent whites and fellow African Americans while on his southern educational tour in 1909. Washington attempted to use cultural features, particularly music, to validate his claims to African Americans' southern identity. "Any one...who will listen to the songs that we sing," he wrote, "will see that the Negro has contributed, not merely his labour, but something of his inner life...to the character and quality of the South."¹⁴⁵ While Washington knew he had to use labor and economics to emphasize the importance of African Americans to the South, Washington also knew that to prevent his New Negro from becoming simply a labor supply to southerners he had to connect African American and southern culture. He used music as a significant part of this display of southern culture and southern tradition. To fully gain the support of the South's white population and ensure the survival and prosperity of his New Negro, Washington sought to integrate his New Negro into southern culture, and this meant dealing with southern culture and traditions emanating from the Civil War and the South's fight to preserve slavery.

For Washington this meant dealing with the legacy of the Confederacy and Dixie, common terms to define the South and Southern culture. Washington, seeking to express African Americans dedication to what he claimed was "*our* beloved South," dealt with the sensitive issue

¹⁴⁴ Washington, "Rural Negro and the South," 127.

¹⁴⁵ Booker T. Washington, *The Story of the Negro: The Rise of the Race from Slavery*, Vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1909), 7.

by embracing it.¹⁴⁶ Washington publically embraced the term and idea of “Dixie” through musical performance and his musical groups. In 1912, as the South’s Lost Cause ideology and America’s reconciliation movement were flourishing, Washington allowed “Dixie” to be used as a stage name for a musical group touring northern college campuses in the name of Tuskegee Institute.¹⁴⁷ In January 1912, Ralph Dunbar, the leader of numerous jubilee musical groups, brought a group of college students to the Lampson Lyceum at Yale University to begin a tour that included northern colleges and the Redpath Chautauqua circuit. The “Dixie Chorus,” as the group was known, played a program of three acts that told of “The Epic of the Negro.” Covering the three-hundred year history of African American progress, this group of black performers led by the white Ralph Dunbar performed in the Tuskegee Singers style and advertised their concerts as performances of “appreciation of the heroic efforts of that Moses of his race—Booker T. Washington—and Tuskegee Institute, which has become the Palestine to which he is leading a singing race.”¹⁴⁸ Dunbar’s performances, though they included a bare minimum of Tuskegee students, reflected on the New Negro Washington was crafting there. The performances were both tributes to and in support of Tuskegee. In fact, despite being a separate group from the Tuskegee Singers, at least one college newspaper made the mistake of telling readers the “Tuskegee Singers” would probably play to a “crowded house.”¹⁴⁹ It is doubtful that a performance by a Ralph Dunbar-led group in tribute and support of Washington and Tuskegee would have gone unnoticed by the image conscious Washington. These Dixie Chorus singers, then, at least tacitly operated with Washington’s approval, and he allowed this use of his name

¹⁴⁶ “Atlanta Exposition Address,” *BTW Papers*, 3:587. Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁷ For more on the Lost Cause and Reconciliation: David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 291; Karen L. Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie: How the South was Created in American Popular Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

¹⁴⁸ “Dixie Chorus Sings Tonight,” *Yale Daily News*, 11 January 1912; “The Dixie Chorus,” Redpath Chautauqua Collection, Chautauqua Brochures, University of Iowa Libraries Special Collections.

¹⁴⁹ “Dixie Chorus Will Appear at Auditorium Friday Night,” 29 February 1912.

and reputation because these performances fit the New Negro image he was attempting to craft: respectable, Christian, and southern.

Washington's own Tuskegee Singers also embraced this Southern Dixie and Confederate tradition. Washington had not only the Tuskegee Singers and Tuskegee Band learn the song "Dixie's Land," but he had his vocal directors teach the school's student body as well. In November 1903, Washington instructed his second in command, Warren Logan, to have Mrs. Jennie Lee, the acting vocal director, "to have the students well drilled in the singing of Dixie" for the arrival of George Foster Peabody, a Northern philanthropist born and raised in Columbus, Georgia.¹⁵⁰ Years later, at the Atlanta Colored Music Festival in Atlanta, Georgia, Washington's Tuskegee Band, under the baton of N. Clark Smith, added "Dixie" as part of its performance for a balcony full of white patrons, including the mayor, members of the city council, and other prominent whites.¹⁵¹ Washington used these performances of "Dixie" by Tuskegee's student body as a way to cultivate and project African American connection to Southern culture and tradition. "Dixie" represented the national song of the former Confederacy and, by association, the South. By singing this song, Washington hoped to display African American southernness by their embrace of southern culture and tradition.

Singing "Dixie" was not simply a survival performance through the "minstrel mask;" it was a calculated element of Washington's crafting of his New Negro. Washington no doubt saw first-hand the Southern affinity for hearing "Dixie" and how this music could warm a crowd to an African American speaker. Just before taking the stage at the Atlanta Cotton Exposition for his 1895 speech, Washington watched as a raucous Southern white crowd cheered as "strains of 'Dixie'" were played by Gilmore's Band. This performance by Washington and the Gilmore

¹⁵⁰ Booker T. Washington to Warren Logan, 18 November 1903, in *BTW Papers*, 7:344-345.

¹⁵¹ "Tuskegee Band Will Parade Thru Streets," *The Atlanta Georgian and News*, 9 February 1911, 2.

Band had at least a small piece of the success Washington sought from the performance of "Dixie." As one Expo correspondent wrote of the sequence of events, "A moment before the strains of 'Dixie'...were filling the big hall; a moment later 'Dixie' had a new meaning for the people of the South."¹⁵² The performance of "Dixie" directly before Washington's pro-southern speech had an impact on the audience. At least one believed the "meaning of 'Dixie'" had been altered, possibly to include African Americans. A similar incident occurred at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York while Washington gave a tribute speech to Abraham Lincoln at the Republican Club's annual Lincoln dinner. Just before Washington stood for his speech, "Dixie" filled the ballroom of the famous hotel. Again, a local correspondent was so moved by the sequence of events and Washington's speech that it drew mention in his report. "So remarkable was the tribute," the correspondent wrote, "and so evident the deep feeling" that eight hundred white men that had just cheered for the Confederacy's national song gave Washington an equal applause.¹⁵³ Washington's use of "Dixie" as a way to cultivate a southern identity for his New Negro seems to have made at least a small impact. As Washington made his tour of the South in the last decade of his life, African American students would bring bands and vocal groups as a tribute to Washington, a fitting one considering Washington's love and use of music. While touring Texas, a crowd of whites and blacks gathered at the train station in Waco to cheer Washington's arrival. As Washington waved to the crowd, a band, most likely from a local African American school, played "Dixie."¹⁵⁴ Washington must have taken some satisfaction that this band chose the southern anthem, "Dixie," as a tribute to him. It would, no doubt, have given him even more pride that white Texans would get to see or read about this southern tribute to and from African Americans.

¹⁵² "An Article in the New York *World*," 18 September 1895, in *BTW Papers*, 4:4.

¹⁵³ "Cheer Former Slave as He Lauds Lincoln," *New York Times*, 13 February 1909.

¹⁵⁴ Horace D. Slatter, "An Account of Washington's Tour of Texas," 1911, in *BTW Papers*, 11: 339-340.

By associating Tuskegee and its students with "Dixie," Washington attempted to connect African Americans to southern culture and southern heritage, not simply as foreign observers but as domestic agents, but Washington had the Tuskegee students and Tuskegee Singers perform and learn more than just "Dixie" to cultivate and project African Americans' southern identity. Washington had his music directors teach the students what he considered to be southern songs and frequently performed these songs for the public. That Washington chose to teach his students "southern" music is not surprising considering his aforementioned attempts to connect African Americans to a southern heritage and southern culture; the surprising aspect of Washington's use of these "Southern" tunes is the origin of these tunes. Tuskegee students were taught, at Washington's behest, minstrel tunes written by Stephen Foster, a composer that wrote an extensive list of popular minstrel and parlor songs in the decades leading to the Civil War. For example, while performing on the Redpath Chautauqua Circuit in the early twentieth century, Bandmaster N. Clark Smith had the Tuskegee Band combine the performance of "Dixie" and "High Old Time in Dixie" with minstrel style songs such as "Old Black Joe" and "Massa's in the Cold, Cold Ground." Both of the latter songs had been written by Foster.¹⁵⁵ These public performances of southern style music, specifically Foster's minstrel tunes, display a focus on identifying African Americans as Southern. Washington's attempt to instill these songs in the Tuskegee student population in addition to public performances makes this crafting of a southern identity for African Americans more evident. A decade earlier, in 1899, Washington instructed his vocal director, Charles G. Harris, to "cultivate the singing of such southern songs as the Old Kentucky Home, Swanee River," and others within the Tuskegee student body.¹⁵⁶ When challenged by a "Mr. Brown" in a letter to William H. Baldwin, Jr., a powerful Tuskegee trustee,

¹⁵⁵ "Tuskegee Institute Band Orchestra and Glee Club," Redpath Chautauqua Collection, Chautauqua Brochures, University of Iowa Libraries Special Collections.

¹⁵⁶ Washington to Charles G. Harris, 22 April 1899, in *BTW Papers*, 5:90.

Washington assured Baldwin that the music repertoire at Tuskegee focused on spirituals and "songs of a Southern flavor such as 'Old Kentucky Home,'" rather than classical music.¹⁵⁷

The choice to use minstrel tunes by Foster seems surprising considering the monetary sacrifices made by the Tuskegee Singers in their refusal to mimic the minstrel image. Foster's popular songs' lyrics were largely written in "blackface dialect," or told a story of loyal black slaves, and were often performed in the racially demeaning blackface form for white audiences.¹⁵⁸ Washington's choice of these songs as his tool to project and cultivate a southern identity for African Americans becomes even more surprising considering his refusal to perform other forms of Southern music with more racial connection and less racist baggage. Ragtime and Jazz, two musical forms associated with African American culture, originated during the Gilded Age, the same period Washington led Tuskegee and became common in the "saloons, dance halls, and brothels" of black communities. By the 1890's, ragtime had begun to become popular in white, middle-class culture and within the next two decades Jazz would emerge as a favorite musical form of the white, middle-class culture as well. Indeed, the popularity of Jazz and ragtime, John Ogasapian and N. Lee Orr argue, ended the Gilded Age's genteel, Victorian ideals in music and ushered in the Jazz Age.¹⁵⁹ While ragtime and Jazz publically emerged in urban and Northern areas like Tin Pan Alley, the Blues emerged primarily in southern, rural, African American communities. This musical form expressed the frustration of African Americans during the post-emancipation era; one could even make the argument that the Blues tune from a southern guitarist was the Gilded Age version of the antebellum spiritual performed by an a

¹⁵⁷ Booker T. Washington to William Henry Baldwin, Jr., 19 May 1904, in *BTW Papers*, 7:506. Despite Washington's assurance to William Baldwin, the first chapter of this thesis shows that Tuskegee did have a clear classical tradition within their musical repertoire. This lie further displays Washington's use of the "mask" in the creation of his New Negro.

¹⁵⁸ Ken Emerson, *Doo-dah!: Stephen Foster and the Rise of American Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1998), 162.

¹⁵⁹ John Ogasapian and N. Lee Orr, *Music of the Gilded Age* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2007), 7-8.

cappella slave group. Blues was distinctly southern and rural, a perfect match for Washington's particular needs.¹⁶⁰ Why, then, did Washington avoid ragtime, Jazz, and especially Blues when these musical forms offered many of the same benefits while avoiding the racial stigma of the minstrel tune, a stigma that Washington and his northern agents, like Fisher, attempted to avoid?

The answer most likely lies in the limitations of these more African American forms of music and in the particular limitations placed on musical performance by African Americans in this historical period. Jazz did not offer a large enough following in the white community during Washington's tenure at Tuskegee and challenged rather than adhered to the Victorian, genteel tradition Washington attempted to display.¹⁶¹ This form would not gain wide popularity until after Washington's death and offered a less marketable and less appealing form to present African Americans as southern because of its lack of genteel respectability. Blues, meanwhile, had severe negative associations with Christianity. Labeled as the "devil's music" for its frequent use of devil-deal imagery in the lyrics, the Blues severely compromised the Christian image Washington attempted to cultivate for African Americans.¹⁶² Ragtime, meanwhile, had "questionable associations with racism" and faced accusations of resembling the style of a "coon song."¹⁶³ "Coon songs" were pervasive during the Gilded Age, particularly in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In the 1890s over six-hundred of these songs were published with some of the more popular ones selling millions of copies. These songs became part of the minstrel repertoire and were an integral part of popular culture's creation of the negative African American image Washington and the Tuskegee Singers constantly fought to change. "Coon

¹⁶⁰ Ulrich Adelt, *Blues Music in the Sixties: A Story in Black and White* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 3.

¹⁶¹ Joel Shrock, *Gilded Age* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2004), 202.

¹⁶² Giles Oakley, *The Devil's Music: A History of the Blues* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1997).

¹⁶³ Brooks, "The 'Musical' Souls of Black Folk," 274; *Etude Magazine* (October, 1898); *Etude Magazine* (December, 1898); *Etude Magazine* (February, 1900).

songs" were designed to create caricatures of southern African Americans, depicting African Americans as dishonest, ignorant, lazy, and immoral. These songs validated white beliefs about the inferiority of African Americans and seemed to justify their second-class citizenship.¹⁶⁴ These were most likely the songs referred to when Washington and his northern agents refused to mimic minstrel tunes.

Washington obviously encouraged Stephen Foster's minstrel tunes to be performed by the Tuskegee musical organizations, despite the minstrel association. It seems, then, Washington viewed minstrel tunes as "coon songs" and Foster's songs as southern tunes. Indeed, while the "coon songs" of the late nineteenth century created caricatures of African Americans and emphasized the negative qualities of African Americans, Foster's tunes, particularly the selection Tuskegee performed, were crafted to resemble the African American spirituals that Washington loved so much. Foster's "Old Black Joe," a common Foster minstrel tune played by the Tuskegee Singers, has been described by both contemporaries of Washington and historians as resembling the spirituals. Scholar Ken Emerson argues "Old Black Joe" "comes closest of Foster's famous songs to the African American spiritual, and it approaches that tradition with sympathy and respect." No less than Washington's challenger for African American leadership, W.E.B. Du Bois, praised Foster's compositions, particularly "Old Black Joe," as being exempted from "the debasements and imitations" of minstrels and "coon songs." Du Bois likewise praised another of Foster's songs in the Tuskegee repertoire, "Old Folks Home," better known as "Swanee River," as being part of a more positive musical genre than mere a minstrel or "coon song."¹⁶⁵ Washington no doubt recognized the plantation melody style of Foster's songs and most likely agreed with Du Bois' assessment of Foster's music. For Washington, Foster's tunes

¹⁶⁴ James H. Dormon, "Shaping the Popular Image of Post-Reconstruction American Blacks: The 'Coon Song' Phenomenon of the Gilded Age," *American Quarterly* 40 (December, 1988), 454-455, 466-467.

¹⁶⁵ Emerson, 258.

did not represent the minstrel or "coon song;" they represented the popularity of the style of the spirituals and offered Washington an acceptable white song with which to emphasize the southern identity of African Americans. Indeed, Washington viewed the spirituals as southern songs themselves.

Washington used the spirituals not only as projections of respectability and Christianity, but also as proof of African Americans' southern identity and contribution to southern culture. That the spirituals were southern creations, born from southern slaves' suffering, was common knowledge then as now. Kelly Miller, the president of Wilberforce University, acknowledged to Washington that his students, "largely from the North and West," did not appreciate these songs as much because, "their spirit" was "not fully understood."¹⁶⁶ Washington fought to keep this southern sentiment alive in the spirituals and his African American students, and he used the spirituals as yet another connection to the South as he crafted the new African American image. A "fine program of old southern songs and melodies," read the *Kingston Daily Freeman's* advertisement for the Tuskegee Singers in July of 1912.¹⁶⁷ Washington and his music directors often used advertisements to prepare their audiences to receive the message Washington and the Tuskegee Singers were attempting to project. "The quartet will sing the old plantation melodies," another advertisement in the *Kingston Daily Freeman* read, melodies "that have been sung for years among the negroes of the south."¹⁶⁸ Tuskegee used this style of self-promotion to craft a southern identity through performance of Southern culture. As John E. Tapia stated about Tuskegee's self-promotions on the Chautauqua Circuit, Tuskegee built their performances "on a romantic southern stereotype of plantation life in the 'ol' South."¹⁶⁹ Tuskegee's brochures,

¹⁶⁶ Kelly Miller to Booker T. Washington, 27 Dec. 1909, in *BTW Papers*, 10:256.

¹⁶⁷ "Tuskegee Singers Tonight," *The Kingston Daily Freeman*, 18 July 1912.

¹⁶⁸ *The Kingston Daily Freeman*, 17 July 1912.

¹⁶⁹ Tapia, *Circuit Chautauqua*, 101.

newspaper advertisements, and speeches during their performances, one imagines, focused on presenting the appropriate image to the white audience, and this image included using the spirituals as a sign of southern heritage and southern identity.

Washington viewed the spirituals as Southern, regional tunes created by African Americans on plantations, and he attempted to instill this knowledge in his students. Washington hoped this would cultivate a Southern identity and a sense of ownership of southern culture for his New Negro. Washington not only taught his students the southern nature of the spirituals but also used his students to teach this lesson. Washington often used mandatory chapel as an opportunity for his students to teach and learn new plantation melodies from "remote parts of the South." As new students entered or visited Tuskegee, Washington asked some of them to teach these new tunes to the student body.¹⁷⁰ He would stand and ask for songs from places like the Mississippi Delta or the South Carolina Lowlands to be sung by new students. Sometimes it took some "prodding," but usually the new student would begin to sing the tune. More and more students would join in until the entire student body was singing.¹⁷¹ These songs, brought from all regions of the South, were meant to display to Tuskegee's students that African Americans were participants, not simply recipients or observers, of southern culture. He wanted them to gain an ownership and a vested interest in their southern identity. Washington believed the spirituals' southern connection through slavery and the plantation offered African Americans a connection to a southern heritage as deep as that of white southerners and hoped that through ritualistic performance of these spirituals his students would learn to appreciate this heritage and express this southern identity.

¹⁷⁰ Washington, "Preface," ix.

¹⁷¹ Thrasher, *Tuskegee: Its Story and Its Work*, 84.

Through music Washington attempted to connect African Americans with a southern heritage, culture, and identity not only to engender the goodwill of southern whites but also to keep African Americans from fleeing a region that had subjugated them. Washington hoped to develop an image of the South as the best place for African Americans to live as another way to link his New Negro with the South. After studying the lives of African Americans in "every part of America," Washington wrote, "I say without hesitation that...the Negro is at his best in the Southern states."¹⁷² Washington believed in all of his world travels that he had "never seen any part of the world" in which African Americans "would be better off than right here in these southern states."¹⁷³ Indeed, Washington claimed the North offered African Americans "much less opportunity...than he has in the South," and encouraged and advised that "the Negro" should "remain where he is" and attempt to uplift themselves in the South.¹⁷⁴ Washington meant this message not only to assure prominent white Southerners of the fidelity of African Americans but also to anchor African Americans in the South. Washington believed in a Jeffersonian vision for his New Negro; he believed a southern, rural identity offered the only path to uplift and survival for his New Negro. Thus, Washington attempted to halt the migration of African Americans to the North and to urban areas of the South that had begun after emancipation and was beginning to pick up in the last decade before Washington's death.

While the Great Migration, has received the most attention of scholars, and deservedly so, a noticeable African American migration already had begun to take place during the Booker T. Washington Era. Within the first decade of emancipation over 80,000 African Americans migrated to free states in the North, growing the African American population in Northern cities

¹⁷² Booker T. Washington, "The Case of the Negro," *The Atlantic Monthly*, November 1889.

¹⁷³ Washington, "Rural Negro and the South," 127.

¹⁷⁴ Booker T. Washington, "Tuskegee: A Retrospective and a Prospect," *The North American Review* 182 (April, 1906), 523.

such as New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and St. Louis by the tens of thousands. From 1860 to 1900 a significant decrease in rural counties with at least a fifty percent African American population occurred, a trend that increased between 1900 and 1910. This pre-WWI migration had a devastating impact on the African American population in the South. Only African Americans with the means to move migrated, meaning the "intelligent laboring class" made up the majority of migrators, what Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson described as the "talented tenth."¹⁷⁵ Waves of African Americans migrated from the rural, agricultural South to the urban, industrial North between the turn of the century and Washington's death in 1915, and African Americans that did not have the means to migrate all the way North seem to have attempted to flee to urban centers of the South. New Orleans alone gained over ten thousand African Americans following the Civil War.¹⁷⁶ Washington argued that African American migration and diffusion limited the New Negro's uplift by preventing their collusion to build political, and more importantly for Washington, economic power within the African American community.

Washington believed the only path to uplift for the New Negro began in the rural South, where they could build an economic foundation that the next generation could turn into a political foundation, and with both of these elements secure, African Americans could launch a campaign for equality that had a legitimate chance to survive and succeed. Thus, Washington encouraged African Americans to remain in the South. "In spite of all talks of exodus," Washington told educators in Madison, Wisconsin, "the Negro's home is permanently in the South...it is our duty to help him prepare himself to live there an independent, educated

¹⁷⁵ Janette Thomas Greenwood, *First Fruits of Freedom: The Migration of Former Slaves and Their Search for Equality in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1862-1900*, 2; Carter G. Woodson, *A Century of Negro Migration* (Washington, DC: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1918), 162-165.

¹⁷⁶ Woodson, 119, 164.

citizen.”¹⁷⁷ Less than five years later, Washington wrote that despite some advising African Americans to “leave the South, and take up his residence in the Northern states,” all “attempts to settle the question of the Negro in the South by his removal...are likely to fail.”¹⁷⁸ The message was not just for southerners, black and white; it was also aimed at northern whites, particularly philanthropists. Washington used African Americans’ southern identity to assuage Northern fears of African American migration north. “Negroes are to remain in the Southern states,” he assured northerners, they “do not want to leave the South, and the southern white people do not want them to leave.”¹⁷⁹ But Washington’s real message remained directed at African Americans: stay in the South. In his infamous Atlanta Exposition speech, Washington called on African Americans to abandon the illusion of “bettering their condition in a foreign land” and, instead, “Cast down your bucket where you are.” Washington repeated the message for southern whites. “Cast down your bucket where you are,” he told southerners, “among the eight millions of Negroes” who have been faithful to the South, love the South, and have worked tirelessly for the South. Referencing the African American contribution to the “magnificent representation of the progress of the South,” Washington instructed southerners, black and white alike, to settle the race problem in the South by cultivating amiable relations.¹⁸⁰ Washington used the cultivation of a southern identity, projected and cultivated through southern music, as a method to anchor African Americans to the South and prevent the ongoing exodus to the North that Washington believed would diminish African American political, social, and economic power.

Washington believed African Americans needed to stay rural and southern to establish the political, social and economic foundations necessary for uplift, and he used the “minstrel

¹⁷⁷ Washington, “The Educational Outlook in the South,” 195.

¹⁷⁸ Washington, “The Case of the Negro.”

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ “Atlanta Exposition Address,” *BTW Papers*, 3:584-585.

mask" and music as tools to encourage whites to accept African Americans as Southern and for African Americans to accept this Southern identity. This Southern heritage and Southern identity was instilled in its students using music. Tuskegee's own school song, written by the Poet Laureate of the Negro Race, Paul Laurence Dunbar, forced the students to ritualistically sing, "Tuskegee, thou pride of the swift growing South."¹⁸¹ Through this line, and other musical tools such as "Dixie" and the spirituals, Washington instilled in his students the belief that African Americans were southerners and were participants in the "growing South" as well as contributors to Southern cultural heritage. Public concerts for "the leading citizens" of the South, at which songs such as "Carry Me Back to Old Virginia" and "My Dear Old Southern Home" were performed, acted as social performances of a southern regional identity.¹⁸² Through these performances Washington hoped to project a non-threatening New Negro who shared a similar southern heritage and culture as their white brethren.

Washington did not use these performances simply as a black survival mechanism. He believed African Americans should have, express, and appreciate a southern identity and heritage. For Washington, the cultivation of a southern identity for his New Negro was not simply a "minstrel mask" deception; like the rest of his New Negro's traits, it was an extension of Washington's own actual personality. Washington believed deeply in his own southern heritage and appreciated this identity enough that he contributed his own money to the building of a Confederate soldier's home without receiving, or desiring, public recognition. Jefferson Manly Falkner, the founder of the Alabama Confederate Soldier's Home, wanted to let Washington's donation of one-hundred dollars toward the soldier's home be known, but he

¹⁸¹ *Tuskegee Student*, 28 April 1906.

¹⁸² "Famous Singers," *The Athens Banner*, 2 November 1915 and "Tuskegee Singers Tonight at Moss Auditorium to be Heard," *The Athens Banner*, 3 November 1915.

acquiesced to Washington's request that the donation "avoid publicity."¹⁸³ Washington's donation shows that his southern message was more than a façade created for public consumption; it was a sincere part of Washington's own personality that he wanted instilled in his New Negro, a task he used music to accomplish.

Even more important than a Southern identity, Washington desired his New Negro to have an African-American identity.¹⁸⁴ This desire stemmed from Washington's own pride in his racial and national identity: "I am proud that I am identified with the colored race in America," Washington told an audience at Harvard University on February 4, 1914.¹⁸⁵ Washington used his public forum as the prominent black leader to encourage blacks to have pride in their race. He wanted them to "cultivate a sense of racial pride" and told a National Negro Business League audience that a "man that has faith and pride in itself will eventually win the respect, the confidence and cooperation of the rest of his world."¹⁸⁶ Equality as important was the expression of an American identity and pride. Washington claimed blacks had "earned the title [of] American citizens by obedience to the law [and] patriotism" in the country.¹⁸⁷ Speaking to an audience of black businessmen, Washington noted the "debatable question" of whether blacks were included under the Declaration of Independence. Washington went on to express his goal to make blacks "a united and potent part of American citizenship" in order to ensure that "no one will dare question our right to be included in any declaration of American rights in the future."¹⁸⁸ Washington used cultural production and performance specifically music, to cultivate a

¹⁸³ When referring to an African-American identity I will use the hyphenated version to emphasize the connection between racial and national identity. When referring, however, to the population or individual's in this chapter I will use the term "black" as synonymous because the identity and the racial group.

¹⁸⁴ "Extracts from an Address at Harvard University," 4 February 1914, in *BTW Papers*, 12:413.

¹⁸⁵ "An Account of a Speech before the National Negro Business League," 20 August 1906, in *BTW Papers*, VIII:462.

¹⁸⁶ "The Negro as Business" (Chicago Herald, Jenkins & Company, 1907), 314.

¹⁸⁷ Jefferson Manly Falkner to Booker T. Washington, 29 October 1902, in *BTW Papers*, 6:563-564.

CHAPTER IV

“TO INSPIRE AND FOSTER A NATIONAL AND RACIAL SPIRIT:” CONSTRUCTING AND
CULTIVATING AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN IDENTITY

Even more important than a Southern identity, Washington desired his New Negro to have an African-American identity.¹⁸⁴ This desire stemmed from Washington's own pride in his racial and national identity. “I am proud that I am identified with the colored race in America,” Washington told an audience at Harvard University on February 4, 1914.¹⁸⁵ Washington used his public forum as the preeminent black leader to encourage blacks to have pride in their race. He wanted them to “cultivate a spirit of racial pride” and told a National Negro Business League audience that a “race that has faith and pride in itself will eventually win the respect, the confidence and cooperation of the rest of the world.”¹⁸⁶ Equally as important was the expression of an American identity and pride. Washington claimed blacks had “earned...the title [of] American citizen by obedience to the law [and] patriotism” to the country.¹⁸⁷ Speaking to an audience of black businessmen, Washington noted the “debatable question” of whether blacks were included under the Declaration of Independence. Washington went on to express his goal to make blacks “a useful and potent part of American citizenship” in order to ensure that “no one will dare question our right to be included in any declaration” of American rights in the future.¹⁸⁸ Washington used cultural production and performance, specifically music, to cultivate a

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¹⁸⁵ “Extracts from an Address at Harvard University,” 4 February 1914, in *BTW Papers*, 12:435.

¹⁸⁶ “An Account of a Speech before the National Negro Business League,” 30 August 1906, in *BTW Papers*, 9:66-67.

¹⁸⁷ Booker T. Washington, *The Negro in Business* (Chicago: Hertel, Jenkins, & Company, 1907), 313.

¹⁸⁸ “An Address Before the National Negro Business League,” 20 August 1913, in *BTW Papers*, 12:260.

combined identity based on racial and national pride. Through the performance of, and a discourse about, black spirituals, Washington attempted to establish an African-American identity for his New Negro.

Washington constructed his New Negro based on his own personality, and central to Washington's own personality, and that of his New Negro's, was the cultivation of a deep racial and national pride that he expressed in his own life and attempted to cultivate in his New Negro. Washington's cultivation of an African-American identity paralleled W.E.B. Du Bois' "double-consciousness" theory. Du Bois argued blacks lacked a "self-consciousness" because they were required to look at themselves "through the eyes of others," creating a "double-consciousness." "One ever feels his twoness," he wrote, "an American, a Negro; two souls."¹⁸⁹ Washington designed his New Negro as a reconciled version of these two identities; his New Negro was part of the black race with African heritage, but this did not preclude him from claiming an American identity. For Washington, as with Du Bois, the two were linked and inseparable. African American history, Du Bois claimed, was the history of merging these two identities into one without destroying or diluting either identity. African Americans would no more "Africanize America" than they would "bleach" their "Negro soul" with "Americanism." Instead, Du Bois claimed blacks wanted to make "it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American" without fearing consequences from either black or white Americans.¹⁹⁰

From the beginning of Washington's education at Hampton Institute, he gained an appreciation for the preservation of black culture as a form of racial pride and the protection of a source of black power. Washington listened to the spirituals sung by the Hampton Singers led by Thomas P. Fenner, who also arranged them in the Western-style. Though altered to display black

¹⁸⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*, (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1909), 3.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

respectability, as defined by American social and cultural standards, these spirituals were arranged to retain some of the "original characteristics" associated with black culture.¹⁹¹ As Washington watched these spirituals bring in much need donations and notoriety for the school, he learned the necessity of preserving these songs as pieces of cultural and racial heritage and sources of racial power. Washington continued to work with his alma mater on this task and dedicated Tuskegee to this goal. In the early 1890s Washington worked with Alice Mabel to establish the Hampton Folk-Lore Society. This society had the expressed purpose of collecting and preserving "the little things peculiar" to the black "race, and to record them and place them where they can be made of permanent value."¹⁹² Washington believed the uplift of the race depended on preserving, projecting, and developing racial consciousness and pride, and he believed black folk-culture would be a key component of this preservation, projection, and development.

Washington had a clear understanding of the importance of cultivating racial pride and consciousness in the black population. Blacks during this time, Washington claimed, were turning away from their racial identity and culture. Washington admitted that he understood the struggles of racial identity crisis that "divided the members of my race." He had struggled with "feelings that divided my mind and confused my purposes" as a young man. Because of "continual adverse criticism," he argued, some blacks had decided to "disavow [their] racial identity, to seek rest and try [their] successes as members of another race than that to which we were born."¹⁹³ Washington blamed the negative image portrayed to blacks in American culture for a lack of racial pride. Washington argued, however, that this trend was beginning to be

¹⁹¹ Fenner, Rathbun, and Cleaveland, arr., *Cabin and Plantation songs*, iii.

¹⁹² Alice Mabel Bacon, "Work and Methods of the Hampton Folk-Lore Society" *The Journal of American Folklore* 11 (Jan.-March, 1898), 17-18.

¹⁹³ Washington, *The Story of the Negro*, Vol. 1, 12.

reversed in the new era of freedom. As long as black inferiority to whites was continually reinforced, he claimed, it would be "natural and inevitable that he should desire to become in everything...white." As a New Negro generation developed in freedom, Washington wrote in 1906, an new understanding of the black race's "possibilities" had begun to lead to a "self-respect" that made black "willingness to surrender his racial identity" begin to decline.¹⁹⁴ In short, Washington noticed that a large group of blacks had become "ashamed...of their history and traditions," and he hoped to reverse this trend by rekindling a pride in black history and culture through an appreciation of black cultural production.¹⁹⁵

Black music, specifically the spirituals, was a key part of this use of black folk-culture to engender race pride and consciousness. Washington and other black leaders, including many black composers and Du Bois, understood the importance of these folk-songs to expressing racial pride. One composer in particular, an Anglo-Black composer named Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, composed a collection of black spirituals that became the standard for subsequent performances or arrangements of black spirituals.¹⁹⁶ Paul Richards claims this collection marked an "especial significance" in Coleridge-Taylor's career. Coleridge-Taylor viewed this collection as the display of black musical ability, and he hoped it would act as a significant contribution to black uplift. Washington's own influence may have played a key role in the arrangement of this collection. Richards argues Coleridge-Taylor had been inspired by the writings of Du Bois and met with Washington while on a visit to the United States.¹⁹⁷ Coleridge-Taylor's choice of Washington to write the preface to his collection of spirituals also indicates Washington's

¹⁹⁴ Washington, "Tuskegee: A Retrospect and a Prospect," 523.

¹⁹⁵ Washington, *The Story of the Negro*, Vol. 1, 12.

¹⁹⁶ William Tortolano, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: Anglo-Black Composer, 1875-1912* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 162; Jon M. Spencer claims Coleridge-Taylor was one of the forerunners of the Harlem Renaissance composers. Spencer, *New Negroes and Their Music*, 3-74.

¹⁹⁷ Paul Richards, "Africa in the Music of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 57 (October, 1987), 1.

influence on Coleridge-Taylor's collection and the purpose of that collection. Washington used that preface to praise Coleridge-Taylor for seeking to "give permanence to the folk-songs of his people" by "giving them a new interpretation" while maintaining "their distinctive traits and...essential spirit."¹⁹⁸ Washington viewed this musical collection as a contribution that expressed racial ability and cultural significance, two components of building racial pride and racial consciousness within his New Negro.

Washington believed the spirituals were the prime medium to construct a foundation of race pride and consciousness. The construction of this foundation required a respectable discourse of the spirituals, and their enslaved black composers, in the black community. "The creation of music so original," Washington praised, "indicates a natural taste and talent for music." This "native talent" allowed blacks to easily perform the music of other people, particularly highbrow music, such as Western classical pieces.¹⁹⁹ While the ability to perform highbrow music allowed blacks to take pride in a superior musical talent, Washington focused on cultivating pride in blacks' own cultural productions. Despite hearing some of the best musicians in the world play what was widely viewed as the most sophisticated art music at the time, Washington wrote, "I would rather hear the jubilee or plantation songs of my race than the finest chorus from the works of Handel or any other of the great composers that I have heard."²⁰⁰ To further establish the spirituals' own high standing as "the admiration of the world," Washington repeatedly told of Prince Henry of Prussia's love for the spirituals and request for copies of them to be sent to him.²⁰¹ Through proclamations of black musical ability and laudations of black folk-

¹⁹⁸ Washington, "Preface," viii.

¹⁹⁹ Washington, *The Story of the Negro*, Vol. 2, 271.

²⁰⁰ Washington, *The Story of the Negro*, Vol. 1, 13.

²⁰¹ Washington, *Character Education*, 251, 253; Emmett Jay Scott and Lyman Beecher Stowe, *Booker T. Washington, Builder of a Civilization* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1916), 152; Heinrich Albert Wilhelm, Prince of Prussia to Booker T. Washington, 4 April 1902, in *BTW Papers*, 6:433.

music, Washington attempted to create a positive discourse of the spirituals in which blacks could take pride.

To build racial pride and racial consciousness also required dealing with black history and black heritage, particularly the history of slavery. Washington encouraged his students, and blacks in general, to “give more attention to the history of their race.” By teaching young blacks, the “path through which [blacks] grew strong and great,” Washington hoped to foster “so much pride” in the black race that they would stop “looking back with regret.”²⁰² Black folk-songs served as a primary tool in this construction of black history, pride, and consciousness. “The Negro folk-song,” Washington wrote in Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s collection, “has for the Negro race the same value that the folk-song of any other people has for that people,” to trace its history and with that history build race pride. Washington claimed these songs reminded blacks of their origin and “foster[ed] race pride” by displaying the power they had to help slaves endure bondage.²⁰³ Washington highlighted this power to his students. The spirituals helped blacks’ “foreparents” endure, he told them in one of his Sunday Evening Talks, “when the burden seemed almost too great for the human body.”²⁰⁴ This connection to the slave past made black folk-songs vitally important to Washington because it offered the most important foundation of blacks’ history under slavery. “Nothing tells more truly what the negro’s life in slavery was,” Washington wrote shortly before he died, “than the songs” of the black slaves. These songs were not just a source of racial history—one that Washington claimed was more useful to blacks in America than any other African (read racial) survival—but also a source of racial power that needed to be protected and preserved.²⁰⁵

²⁰² Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 182.

²⁰³ Washington, “Preface,” viii.

²⁰⁴ Washington, *Character Education*, 253-254.

²⁰⁵ Washington, “Plantation Melodies, Their Value,” *Musical Courier* 71 (1915).

The rejection of these spirituals by many blacks compelled Washington's obsession with their preservation. Middle-class, upper-class, and young blacks born into freedom were "apt" to view the spirituals as "something only to be laughed at" and "looked down upon" as vestiges of their subjugation in slavery.²⁰⁶ Washington noted that some blacks discouraged the singing of spirituals "because they bring up memories of the trying conditions which gave them rise."²⁰⁷ Washington, however, viewed black history as a defining feature of black heritage, and the spirituals were "the records" of blacks' "past life in slavery." A past life he believed his New Negro needed to "value more highly." Through the preservation of black culture, particularly black folk-songs, Washington hoped to instill in his New Negro black pride which would help blacks "to cling closer...to their own people" and develop a sense of racial pride in black history and culture expressed in these songs.²⁰⁸ As Isaac Fisher remembered years after Washington's death, Washington knew "that as the Negro advanced in education, he would be inclined to abandon the 'Spirituals' because they reminded him of his past." Praising Washington's "prophetic" analysis of the situation, Fisher reminded the Fiftieth Anniversary audience that Washington "stroved to prevent an irreparable loss" to black culture by preserving the spirituals.²⁰⁹

To preserve the spirituals Washington used Tuskegee to teach his students to love these songs and to pass that love on to their own students after graduation. He even made it a primary focus of Tuskegee's educational purpose. "[I]t is the object of the Institute," Washington wrote, "to make these old, sweet, slave songs a source of pride and pleasure to the students."²¹⁰ This fit

²⁰⁶ Bacon, "Work and Methods of the Hampton Folk-Lore Society," 17.

²⁰⁷ Washington, "Preface," ix.

²⁰⁸ Washington, *The Story of the Negro*, Vol. 1, 13.

²⁰⁹ "Booker T. Washington and the Negro Spirituals."

²¹⁰ Booker T. Washington, *Autobiography: The Story of My Life and Work* (Naperville, IL: J.L. Nichols & Co., 1901 1901), 357.

within the larger purpose of Tuskegee that Washington rarely explicitly expressed but nonetheless guided his actions. Education at Tuskegee sought to instill in its students a "sort of race pride and race consciousness" that included developing "the best that is in them."²¹¹ Washington understood that the cultivation of racial pride and consciousness required the preservation of black folk-music in his own students. Fisher remembered Washington's desire to "create at Tuskegee such an appreciation" for the spirituals that "it might be easy to preserve this undoubted cultural asset to the Negro for all time."²¹² After cultivating this appreciation, Washington demanded that his students spread this appreciation and contribute to the preservation of this racial and cultural asset throughout the black South. "Wherever you go after you leave this school," Washington told his students, "I hope you will never give up the singing of these songs." Encourage "your pupils [to] sing them as you have sung them here," he advised, and "teach them to see the beauty which dwells in these songs."²¹³

The spirituals' beauty offered more than just aesthetic pride to blacks; Washington believed these spirituals were a source of racial power. Indeed, some of the spirituals' power came from their beauty. Washington claimed the spirituals contained a "pathos and beauty" that made a positive "impression upon persons of the highest culture."²¹⁴ They touched "the common heart of man," Washington noted, and "awakened a responsive chord in the minds and hearts" of all who heard them.²¹⁵ The spirituals gave blacks the ability to display black culture to white, highbrow audiences in a positive manner, a power that not only aided in the solicitation of donations for black schools but also helped portray black culture, and thus blacks themselves, as respectable and civilized. In a tribute speech years after Washington's death, Isaac Fisher

²¹¹ Washington, *The Story of the Negro*, Vol. 1, 13-14.

²¹² "Booker T. Washington and the Negro Spirituals."

²¹³ Washington, *Character Building*, 251.

²¹⁴ Washington, "Preface," ix.

²¹⁵ Washington, "Plantation Melodies, Their Value."

summarized this understanding of the “great power” of the spirituals to charm the “civilized world...by their beauty.” He also noted Washington’s belief the spirituals were cultural productions that would serve an “enduring service” to the black race.²¹⁶ These cultural productions, however, were not just exhibitions of black culture for white audiences. Washington viewed these songs as cultural assets that helped blacks endure the hardships of slavery and would help them endure with patience the generational steps to equality. Noting that the spirituals had “played a great part in the life of the members of my race,” Washington recounted how these songs had given slaves the power to endure “all his trials.”²¹⁷ Washington even went as far as to claim the black race “depends for the righting of his wrongs upon his songs.”²¹⁸ For Washington, spirituals were cultural assets that offered blacks the power to endure and forgive. This capacity to endure and forgive would be required to express the American identity Washington believed was connected to black racial identity and necessary to project and cultivate within his New Negro.

Washington used rituals and celebrations of American history and American identity to instill a sense of American identity within his students and to display black Americanness to white America. From Tuskegee’s opening in 1881, Washington used the school as a tool to connect blacks to an American identity. Tuskegee opened with the raising of an American flag on July 4, 1881. Surrounded by a small group of black students, Washington watched as the students carried out his order to raise the ultimate symbol of America.²¹⁹ This was not a simple matter of form or tradition of all, or even most, American schools. The American flag did not

²¹⁶ “Booker T. Washington and the Negro Spirituals.”

²¹⁷ Booker T. Washington to W.C. Buckner, 19 April 1909, in *BTW Papers*, 10:90.

²¹⁸ Booker T. Washington, *Black-Belt Diamonds: Gems from the Speeches, Addresses, and Talks to Students of Booker T. Washington*. Victoria Earle Matthews, Comp. and arr. (New York: Fortune and Scott, Publishers, 1898), 46.

²¹⁹ Ludlow, ed. *Tuskegee: Its Story and Its Songs*, 4; Stephen Mansfield, *Then Darkness Fled: The Liberating Wisdom of Booker T. Washington* (Nashville: Cumberland House Publishing, 1999), 161-162.

take its traditional place above schools, even northern schools, until around the turn of the century, about the same time the American Flag Association formed and the outlawing of the flag's desecration by Congress.²²⁰ The residents of Tuskegee, at least the ones that knew Washington, would not, however, have been surprised to see Tuskegee's students raising an American flag. Washington was an American patriot. Washington expressed as much pride as anyone in his American heritage, and throughout his life, Washington spoke of major American figures as if they were part of his own history—because as far as he was concerned they were. As a result, audiences that knew Washington's personality would not have been surprised to hear him reference the Founding Fathers or the New England Pilgrims as freely as he referenced Abraham Lincoln. While Washington had a deeply rooted pride in being a black man and all of the heritage that identity brought with it, Washington viewed himself and blacks as being part of an equally important American identity and American heritage. As one author has written of Washington, "this was more than rhetoric to move potential donors. Washington's philosophy and the life's work that grew from it were both bound up in the ideal of America."²²¹

These American ideals were also present in Washington's use of music and culture to uplift blacks. News reporters noted the opening of schools with "patriotic" songs and Washington filled his personal archive of papers with patriotic sheet music, presumably performed by Tuskegee's numerous musical organizations for Tuskegee's student body on a frequent basis. These tunes varied widely and many had an American historical context associated with them. From "God Bless the Soldier," a song dedicated to the Grand Army of the Republic, to "Song of Liberty," a tune dedicated to the American Revolutionary Society,

²²⁰ Robert Justin Goldstein, ed., *Desecrating the American Flag: Key Documents of the Controversy from the Civil War to 1995* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 5; Louis P. Masur, *The Soiling of Old Glory: The Story of a Photograph That Shocked America* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 99.

²²¹ Mansfield, *Then Darkness Fled*, 161-163.

Tuskegee's students reified their American identity through nationalist music.²²² Even more explicitly American, "The Star Spangled Banner" musically opened and closed Tuskegee's school years.²²³ Along with the commonly heard spirituals, Commencement Day at Tuskegee often included a display of American identity to prominent white visitors. White visitors to the school frequently compelled Washington and his Tuskegee students to perform the "Star Spangled Banner." Preparing for a visit by George Peabody, a philanthropist and donor to the school, Washington ordered his vocal teacher, Jennie C. Lee, to prepare the students to sing this nationally recognized American song.²²⁴ In addition, Washington regularly took the stage to speak after a performance of the "Star Spangled Banner," including his infamous 1895 Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition Speech.²²⁵ The use of patriotic, American tunes, particularly the "Star Spangled Banner," was an attempt by Washington to show black patriotism and participation in American culture, but Washington used the spirituals to make a more explicit and pronounced unification of black and American identities.

Washington sought to imbed black history and culture within the story of American history and culture in order to ensure the two could not be separated. By intertwining the two histories and cultures, Washington hoped to validate black claims to full American citizenship and cultivate an African-American identity that he and his New Negro would display to white America. Washington accomplished this validation of the blacks as American citizens by linking the spirituals to black contributions to American society and culture. Washington instilled in his

²²² "Tuskegee Normal Institute," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 1 December 1897, 9; "Booker T. Washington—Printed Materials—Music," Booker T. Washington Papers, Roll 430, Tuskegee Archives.

²²³ Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee*, 164. Though the "Star Spangled Banner" would not become the National Anthem until 1931, it did become a popular official song used by many military branches in the last decade of the nineteenth century. See: Marc Leepson, *Flag: An American Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), 66.

²²⁴ Booker T. Washington to Warren Logan, 18 November 1903, in *BTW Papers*, 7:344-345.

²²⁵ "Tuskegee Band Will Parade Thru Streets," *The Atlanta Georgian and News*, 9 February 1911, 2; Mark Howland Rawitsch, *The House on Lemon Street: Japanese Pioneers and the American Dream* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2012), 80.

students that the spirituals were “the most original product” with which not only black culture but also American culture “stands accredited.”²²⁶ His claims were even more substantial, however, than just accrediting the spirituals as the premiere American music. Washington stated that, apart from Native American music, “the Negro folk-song is the only distinctively American music.”²²⁷ Washington was not the only prominent figure to make this claim. Edward Everett Hale, a Unitarian minister from Boston, was also quoted as saying the spirituals were “the only American music,” and Washington noted that respected music critics had also validated the spirituals’ claim as the only American music.²²⁸ These critics claimed, according to Washington, that the spirituals’ ability to be developed into “more elaborate and refined musical forms” made these songs “among the most original contributions that America has made, not only to music but to any one of the so-called fine arts.”²²⁹

Possibly the most famous adherent to the theory that black folk-songs were the only American production was Antonin Dvorak, a famous Czech composer that visited the United States in the late nineteenth century. Dvorak arrived in America in September of 1892 to study the national music of America. Joseph Horowitz has described him as a “cultural nationalist” who believed national art music was rooted in the songs of the common folk. As a result, in his quest to determine and study America’s national music, Dvorak began by investigating its folk-music, specifically the spirituals.²³⁰ Writing less than a year after arriving in America, Dvorak stated he was “satisfied” that he had found the “real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States,” and definitively stated the spirituals

²²⁶ Washington, *Character Education*, 251.

²²⁷ Washington, “Preface,” ix.

²²⁸ Helen W. Ludlow, “The Hampton Student Singers,” *Southern Workman* 23 (May, 1894), 74.

²²⁹ Washington, *The Story of the Negro*, Vol. 1, 12-13.

²³⁰ Joseph Horowitz, “Dvorak and Boston,” *American Music* 19 (Spring, 2001), 5.

were American.²³¹ Dvorak added a respected European voice to the discussion surrounding the spirituals as an American production. His proclamation that black music held the honor of being the truly American music and his advocacy that this music be used as the foundation of American compositions inflamed an "already thriving...American discourse."²³² Washington noted Dvorak's participation in this discourse in an article written just before Washington died. The article referenced Dvorak's support of the spirituals as a worthy American musical form in Dvorak's infamous New World Symphony, composed from motifs of the spirituals.²³³ Like Dvorak and other music critics, Washington fervently believed the spirituals were American folk-songs, perhaps the only American folk-songs, but Washington's real purpose in promoting Dvorak's claims was the connection of blacks and American citizenship.

Chautauqua managers echoed this sentiment and used the belief that the spirituals were the only true American music to market black musical groups that performed black spirituals. "It has been said," A.L. Curtis wrote in an article in *Talent*, a periodical of the Chautauqua movement, "that the only truly national music in the United States is that given us by the Negro race." This sentiment was part of a subtle attempt by Chautauquas to connect their events with American attributes and to educate those attributes into its audiences.²³⁴ In the early twentieth century, Washington took advantage of this marketing opportunity to link black and American together into an African-American identity by speaking and having his Tuskegee Singers perform on the Chautauqua Circuit. Black groups performing spirituals were staples on the Chautauqua circuits, especially as the country approached World War I. Searching for an

²³¹ "The Real Value of Negro Melodies," *New York Herald*, 21 May 1893; Antonin Dvorak, "Music in America," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 90 (February, 1895), 432.

²³² Lawrence Schenbeck, "Representing America, Instructing Europe," 14.

²³³ Washington, "Plantation Melodies, Their Value."

²³⁴ A.L. Curtis, "The Fisk Jubilee Singers," *Talent* 16 (1906), 1, found in Paige Lush, *Music in the Chautauqua Movement: From 1874 to the 1930s* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2013), 148.

American musical culture to counter foreign art music, Chautauqua circuits turned to spirituals performed by Jubilee groups like the Tuskegee Singers. While the advertisement for these Jubilee groups could be subtly racist, for the most part, these groups were marketed as an educated, cultured, and 'safe' entertainment for Chautauqua audiences.²³⁵ "Safe" meant both cultured and American; Chautauquas were dedicated to presenting an acceptable American culture, including the black American culture. While Chautauquas were certainly not attempting to fight the struggle for racial equality, black performers understood their performances could carry such implications. Performers on the Chautauqua Circuit likely had the same reaction one black performer in a Jubilee group did when he stated that whites "who would not sit in the same pew with a Negro, under the magic of their song were able to get a new light on the questions of social equality."²³⁶ Though Washington's views on the Chautauqua are largely limited to circumstantial conjecture, he and his students probably had these same thoughts. Indeed, Washington's scheduling of the Tuskegee Singers to perform on the Chautauqua Circuit was an attempt to uplift blacks by reifying their American citizenship and identity.

While Washington's personal views about what the Chautauqua meant for blacks can only be pieced together through conjecture, we can assume he held the same beliefs and views as other Chautauquans on the meaning and purpose of these events. Chautauquans viewed these events as places to display the criteria for being an American, and Chautauqua managers worked to create events, bureaus, and circuits that sought "to ensure that audiences associated Chautauquas with appropriate American attributes."²³⁷ Audiences at Chautauquas received more than lectures and entertainment dealing with American education; they were participants in a

²³⁵ Lush, *Music in the Chautauqua Movement*, 148-149; Tapia, *Circuit Chautauqua*, 101.

²³⁶ Charlotte Canning, *The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance*, (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2005), 88.

²³⁷ Paige Lush, *Music in the Chautauqua Movement*, 148.

social construction of American identity. Chautauquas were contested spaces for the negotiation of "Americanness," and places where Charlotte Canning has argued that "American culture was made and remade." They were stages with largely receptive audiences for certain groups, like blacks, to assert their Americanness by inserting themselves into mainstream American culture. Canning even claims Chautauquas used a discourse of "uplift" as a distinctly American theme that "symbolized...patriotism." Indeed, they viewed uplift as "synonymous with the word 'America,'" and Chautauqua promoters and participants used this and other themes to proclaim Chautauqua as the "most American thing in America."²³⁸ Black leaders in the racial uplift movement, particularly Washington, knew what Chautauquas meant and represented. Washington's participation as a lecturer and his encouragement and allowance of the Tuskegee Singers to perform at Chautauqua events was more than a solicitation of philanthropic donations from a new source. It proclaimed American status for blacks and reasserted the claim of the spiritual as the truly American art form. Washington believed performing the spirituals at these events would help insert blacks into American culture and thus assert their American identity and citizenship.

Chautauquas were themselves performances of a specific American culture, small-town America. Chautauqua managers and the communities that supported these Chautauquas were attempting to shape American identity to mimic the small-town America they were performing at Chautauqua events. Charlotte Canning has argued that this performance of community and the belief one could teach community "was basic to Chautauqua." Indeed, many even believed these events were the "driving force behind community," and once community had been created through these Chautauqua Circuit events these communities "would define the direction of the

²³⁸ Canning, *The Most American Thing in America*, 1, 21.

nation.”²³⁹ In other words, participants and leaders of Chautauqua events believed they were shaping the direction of America by creating its foundational communities. Chautauquas, however, did more than simply create a small-town community atmosphere. They attempted to shape this sense of community and define community based on a “criteria of belonging.” Participants believed that defining America meant defining its communities, thus, they attempted to shape and control the acceptable participants within the ideal community.²⁴⁰ Washington, as a frequent leader and participant in Chautauqua events no doubt understood the philosophical and social implications of these events. As a result, his participation and especially the participation of his Tuskegee Singers display an attempt to insert blacks as acceptable participants in the ideal community and, thus, America. If the Chautauquas themselves were performative and communicative acts that expressed American identity and sought to instill a particular American vision to its audiences, then black participation, specifically by Washington and the Tuskegee Singers, can, and probably should, also be seen as performative and communicative acts. This view of Chautauquas caused him to see these events as an opportunity to associate American ideals, attributes, and culture with black cultural productions. For Washington, Chautauquas offered a stage for the performance of blackness as cultured, educated, Christian, and American in the effort to reshape the image of American blacks. Thus, performances of the spirituals at these events were social performances by blacks of an American identity, heritage, and culture meant to be communicated to white America. In other words, through the performance of spirituals Washington was attempting to include blacks in the American community.

Washington believed blacks needed to embrace their own culture and integrate that culture within mainstream American culture to achieve uplift. As a result, Washington attempted

²³⁹ Ibid., 5, 72, 74.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 21, 77, 79

to cultivate at Tuskegee a love of spirituals, a distinctly black cultural production, and he attempted to project this black cultural production as a contribution to American culture. Through his school Washington sought to foster an appreciation of black culture to build a racial pride in his graduates, and by extension blacks in the South. Washington, however, wanted this black culture and pride to be intimately connected with an American identity. In crafting this African-American identity, Washington hoped to incorporate black history and culture into mainstream American culture and history, and he believed this would lead to the racial uplift by improving the black image in both the black and white communities. Contrary to some that have viewed Washington as an "Uncle Tom," Washington should be viewed in much the same vein as other black leaders during his era. Indeed, his leadership style and goals were in harmony with many of other black leaders, including W.E.B. Du Bois who is largely described as Washington's nemesis on social issues and strategies.

Washington devised his black uplift strategies with many of the same goals and beliefs as other black educators and leaders at the turn of the century. Like Washington, John Wesley Work III, a professor at Fisk University in the early twentieth century, believed that blacks were Americans and that music helped prove that fact. Indeed, Work argued that because the black spirituals were "an American production" born of the slave on American soil blacks were the "American of Americans." For Work, as with Washington, this music offered blacks the "possibility of race consciousness," which would usher in the "New Day of Hope."²⁴¹ Erastus Milo Cravath, a member of the American Missionary Association and the president of Fisk University, made black music a priority in the lives and education of students at Fisk University from Reconstruction through the 1890s. Under Cravath's leadership Fisk University graduates

²⁴¹ John Wesley Work III, *Folk Song of the American Negro* (Nashville, TN: F.A. McKenzie, 1915), 26-27, 33, 116.

left with a recognition of “the importance of the Negro music in the development of the race.” Cravath oversaw the expansion of the Fisk Jubilee Singers tours to Europe and believed that “no system of education for the Negro race was complete without his music.”²⁴² While Cravath was a white Northern missionary, the curriculum he established at Fisk and the emphasis he put on the Fisk Jubilee Singers had an impact on Fisk’s graduates, as can be plainly viewed in its most famous graduate, W.E.B. Du Bois.

While Du Bois’ first connection to these songs began as a child, he did not truly understand or appreciate them fully until he moved to Nashville, Tennessee, to attend Fisk University in the 1880s. Years after his graduation from Fisk, Du Bois echoed Washington’s claims and the teachings he received at Fisk. The spirituals, he believed, offered blacks a cultural asset as a connection to not only an American identity but also a black identity. “[T]here is no true, American music,” Du Bois argued, “but the wild sweet melodies of the Negro slave.” These spirituals, which Du Bois refers to as the “Sorrow Songs” in a later chapter, were the single “greatest gift of the Negro people” to American culture and humanity. Like Washington, however, Du Bois viewed these songs as more than a connection to American culture; they were the foundation of an appreciation of black culture and, as a result, the cultivation of a black consciousness and black pride. Du Bois praised the Fisk Jubilee Singers for their European renditions of these songs while at the same time criticizing the “caricature[s]” sung by “straggling quartettes” that were spoiling their beauty with “debased melodies which vulgar ears scarce know from the real.”²⁴³ Washington and Du Bois both viewed the spirituals as a cultural asset that could be deployed as a tool to display and cultivate black pride, consciousness,

²⁴² Ibid., 114.

²⁴³ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 11, 251-253.

respectability, and national identity while also countering the negative, caricatured image put forward by minstrel groups.

Black leaders viewed the spirituals as tools and important cultural assets to be preserved, taught, and displayed in public and private. For these leaders, including Washington, the spirituals offered more than an attempt to assimilate into mainstream America; they offered a tool to interweave themselves into American culture and history while simultaneously maintaining their own racial identity. Indeed, they used these songs as a way to improve and uplift that racial identity by crafting a new image of the black race in the New South. Integral to this new image was the connection of black and American identities. Black leaders sought to cultivate a racial pride and racial consciousness while also claiming their American citizenship and identity. Music, specifically the spirituals, gave these leaders the tool needed to craft the African-American identity. Equally as important, the New Negro identity being crafted throughout the South in black schools was designed to challenge the prevalent negative stereotypes and caricatures. As with Du Bois' "Talented Tenth," Washington's New Negroes were to become role models for the rest of the black community and the embodiment of the black race in the American mind. Washington hoped this image would not only become a reality within the black community but also that this image would replace the Old Negro of slavery in white American minds. Central to this task and central to establishing blacks after the Civil War as different from their enslaved predecessors was the establishment of their American heritage and citizenship. Music played a key role in this process, and Washington was not alone in his use of it for this purpose.

CONCLUSION

Washington's use of music in crafting an African-American identity for his New Negro parallels identity constructions at other black schools. Like the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, the New Negro movement before WWI sought to use cultural productions as assets in cultivating racial consciousness and racial pride within the black community. Washington's attempt to craft a new image for African Americans took the spirituals and used them to display racial ability to the white community. Washington believed that performances of the spirituals as art songs in the European style would show that African Americans were respectable, Christian, Southern, and American. By having the spirituals arranged and performed as four-part harmonies in the Western musical tradition, Washington sought to display African Americans' ability to assimilate what most considered high culture at the time. The Victorian appearance and discipline the Tuskegee Singers performed these songs with was an attempt by Washington to display the moral character of African Americans. By showing discipline, performing overtly religious music, and donning a Victorian clothing style, Washington attempted to reinforce African American respectability while projecting a religious, moral character. Washington boosted these attributes with a racial, regional, and national identity as well. Through the spirituals Washington reinforced African Americans' racial identity while connecting that racial identity to American culture and history. Washington hoped this would project a true African-American identity and connect the uplift of his race with that of America in general. Washington also used "southern" songs in an attempt to connect African Americans to the South. Washington firmly believed the uplift of African Americans required a connection to the South and help from southern whites.

Washington did not originate this use of musical production as a way to uplift African Americans by projecting a racial image. He followed a tradition already established by Fisk University and Hampton Institute during Reconstruction. Fisk University provided the performance model that Tuskegee and Booker T. Washington would use two decades later. Fisk University was especially interested in challenging the prevailing notions about African Americans immediately following the abolition of slavery. One of the most famous elements of Fisk University's history and most effective challenges to the negative African American image of the time were the Fisk Jubilee Singers from 1871 to 1878. Like the Tuskegee Singers under Washington, the Fisk Jubilee Singers were designed to campaign for donations and funding for the University, but George White, the Singers' white leader, and the American Missionary Association (AMA) leaders of the university also viewed this group and its tours as a way to challenge and change perceptions of African Americans. This group toured America and Europe performing a repertoire of African American spirituals created during slavery but performed in a Western European musical style. The Jubilee Singers, White, and the AMA leaders hoped this would prove African Americans' ability for civilization and assimilation into white society. Indeed, the original repertoire of the first performance contained mostly classical Western European music, but the reaction the group received after performing one of the spirituals on the program caused White to program primarily these Europeanized spirituals for the rest of the group's performances.²⁴⁴ The Fisk Jubilee Singers popularized African American music, particularly the spirituals, in America and challenged the prevailing negative images coming from the traveling minstrel groups.

Other African American schools, like Hampton Institute, copied Fisk's lead and created their own traveling singing groups. While Washington attended Hampton Institute in the mid-

²⁴⁴ Toni P. Anderson, "Tell Them We are Singing for Jesus," 97-102.

1870s, he was exposed to the spirituals and their use in making connections with white southerners. These performances had a profound impact on Washington's use of spirituals later. Like other aspects of Tuskegee, Washington included many of Samuel Armstrong's philosophies at Hampton, including the Hampton Singers and use of spirituals, in the educational programs at Tuskegee.²⁴⁵ Fisk had created a model for African Americans to attempt to control their own image in American society and Hampton exposed Washington to that approach. Washington duplicated this model two decades later with the Tuskegee Singers, and Tuskegee continued this tradition through the Harlem Renaissance under Dr. Robert Moton and various music directors, most prominently William L. Dawson.

The use of spirituals by African American educational institutions sought more than simply a positive image. They also sought to make that image a reality by instilling these attributes and identities into African American students. Washington used the spirituals and other music as part of the religious, discipline routine at Tuskegee to instill in his students the attributes he attempted to project through the Tuskegee Singers. In addition, the constant use of spirituals reflected more than Washington's own love of this music; it also acted as a way to foster a love of spirituals within his students and to instill racial pride in African American cultural productions and contributions to American culture. Image creation and identity socialization act in a dialectic fashion. Washington and other African American leaders put forward positive images to replace negative images—images Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois held themselves—while also attempting to create a foundation of African Americans that exhibited these positive traits to further the image. Washington, in essence, was playing the long-game in racial equality. Until he could cultivate the qualities of his New Negro into a majority

²⁴⁵ Jacqueline M. Moore, *Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003), 23.

African Americans, Washington used his students to inject the image of his New Negro into American culture. While scholars such as Henry Louis Gates are correct in the assessment that these images are fictions, Washington desired to make them a reality. These images were meant not only to replace the negative African American stereotypes but also replace African American traits that Washington himself did not approve of in the population.

These negative images of African Americans, produced largely by minstrel performances, dominated the white ideas and stereotypes of African Americans during the early nineteenth century. These minstrel images, which continued into the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction eras, portrayed African Americans as docile, uneducated, and primitive people embodied in the comical caricatures of Sambo, and his "alter egos," Jim Crow, Zip Coon, and Uncle Tom.²⁴⁶ These images informed white Americans' view of how African Americans were supposed to act and perform. Performances on the minstrel stage, by both whites in blackface and African American performers, reinforced negative images of African Americans in the white mind. For whites minstrel performances and the caricatures performed became authentic representations of blackness and reified African American inferiority.²⁴⁷ As entrenched as these images, discourses, and tropes were in America, African Americans fought to change them by putting forward their own images of the African American race and African American culture. African Americans used performance to create their own counter-image to the minstrel image dominant in American culture.

²⁴⁶ G. D. Engle, *This Grotesque Essence: Plays from the American Minstrel Stage* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1978); J. Boskin, *Sambo: The Rise and Demise of an American Jester* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); K. W. Goings, *Mammy and Uncle Moses: Black Collectibles and American Stereotyping* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Todd Boyd, ed., *African Americans and Popular Culture* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008), 187-188.

²⁴⁷ Kevern Verney, *African Americans and US Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 16; Jearold Winston Holland, *Black Recreation: A Historical Perspective* (Chicago: Burnham, Inc. Publishers, 2002), 125-127.

This process developed and changed throughout history, exhibiting different characteristics as defined by the particular time period and movement leaders. Each of these movements built on one another and provided models for racial uplift and New Negro performance. As historian Kevin K. Gaines has shown, each historical time period emphasized different aspects for uplift. During Reconstruction, African Americans sought uplift through education coupled with religious instruction. In the post-Reconstruction era, between the 1880s and WWI, African Americans built on education as a strategy and included economic and social mobility through self-help campaigns. After WWI, African Americans transitioned to a militant challenge of discrimination and a heightened race consciousness.²⁴⁸ This led to different movements within the same historical process. While each movement sought to redefine blackness, these different movements included different attributes and emphasis on different identities. These movements were all involved with reimagining African Americans for the purpose of racial uplift, but they each did so with slight variances in the characteristics with which to define the New Negro.

Many of these variances involved the differences in strategies. For instance, individuals from many different disciplines participated in the creation and projection of each New Negro. Academics, artists, musicians, poets, actors, writers, and educators, all participated in this process of reimagining the African Americans. These different disciplines each projected and created different New Negroes, even within the same time period, a fact acknowledged during the Harlem Renaissance.²⁴⁹ Even more evident, each historical period emphasized different strategies based on historical context and the dominant leadership structure at the time. The Harlem Renaissance, for example, associated primarily with, and had its most influential

²⁴⁸ Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 1-2.

²⁴⁹ Spencer, *The New Negroes and Their Music*, 136.

participants and leaders from, the professional art world and the academy. Writers, poets, and academics were the most influential participants and advocates during this time. The Booker T. Washington Era, however, gained its most influential participants and leaders from the realm of education. Where leadership and power were focused in the African American community affected the dominant New Negro image that was projected to American society. In short, if emphasis of the New Negro of the Harlem Renaissance era was projected and created in the art and scholarship emanating from the streets of Harlem, then the emphasis of the New Negro of the Booker T. Washington era was projected and created in the educational doctrines emanating from African American educational institutions in the South.

Booker T. Washington's participation in this reimagining of the race alters the way he should be viewed on racial uplift. Though Washington has typically been viewed as conservative in the realm of racial uplift, his use of the spirituals show that his goals, tools, and strategies were largely similar to leaders classified as more radical, like W.E.B. Du Bois. The biggest difference between Washington and other leaders during his time were not his intentions or even his methods but rather his language. Washington's "minstrel mask" discourse has caused people to remember him at best as a racial uplift conservative and at worst an Uncle Tom. Washington, however, is probably better viewed as a moderate and pragmatist. He challenged racial lines where and how he believed he could be successful and patiently bided his time on racial issues he believed could not be challenged until later. Through music and performance, Washington attempted many of the same strategies that other leaders, like Du Bois, also advocated. He attempted to create a new, more positive image as a way of challenging racial stereotypes, but did so while trying to refrain from endangering himself, his school, or southern African Americans.

Admittedly, Washington cannot be viewed simply as a radical social activist either. Washington held and expressed many of the same negative racial images of African Americans that whites held.²⁵⁰ Indeed, the creation and projection of a positive image of African Americans was still an attempt to stereotype African Americans, albeit in a positive manner. The spirituals and Tuskegee Singers were themselves performances of an equally false African American image. Even Washington's attempt to instill his New Negro values into his students indicates a belief that the actual African American culture needed to be changed, altered to conform to some higher and more civilized ideal. Washington's construction of a new, though positive, image of African American culture and identity was just as restrictive as the negative stereotype created by white racist images of minstrel performance. It is important to note and understand that *any* construction of particular qualities associated with a racial or cultural identity restrict and exclude people. These constructions are meant not only to define the member of that culture but also to aid in the identification of people outside that culture. Constructions of identities and culture naturally produce restrictive, false images and stereotypes, and they are typically enforced through ritualistic education and performance by a hegemonic power structure. Washington's New Negro is no different. Washington used Tuskegee to ritualistically imprint his vision of African American culture on to his students, using his immense power as principal and preeminent leader of African Americans to create, cultivate, and enforce his vision of African American culture at Tuskegee.

In addition, Washington jealously protected his own status as the leader of the African American race and the architect of the new, positive African American image that would be constructed during this era. Qualities that Washington identified for the New Negro image were

²⁵⁰ John David Smith, *An Old Creed for the New South: Proslavery Ideology and Historiography, 1865-1918* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 209.

the only acceptable ones, and only Washington's strategy and leadership were tolerated during this time. Anyone, namely W.E.B. Du Bois, who challenged Washington's leadership—even if they held the same strategies and goals—would come under attack by Washington's Tuskegee Machine. Washington did not just have a vision of the new African American race, a pragmatic strategy to project and instill that image, and a belief in racial uplift; he also had an ego that would not allow anyone else's vision to supersede his own. This very well may have been the reason Du Bois and Washington failed to achieve racial equality or even drastically change the image of African Americans during this era.

While, the results Washington hoped for largely failed to materialize from his efforts, individuals like Walter H. Page did profess a change in the way they viewed African Americans through the performance of music. Recalling a time when Washington had his students sing spirituals at Tuskegee, Page noted that while he had heard these songs many times before, "I had never heard them sung by a thousand voices...of educated Negroes." Claiming that he had associated these songs with the slave past, he admitted that this performance now made him think about these songs as songs of the "freedman in quest of education." His image had changed. He now saw these songs as the songs of new "ambitious youths of the race."²⁵¹ If his account is to be believed, these songs altered the image of African Americans for Walter H. Page. Page became a longtime partner of Washington's in the publishing of autobiographies and other Washington books. But, the story of Page and Isaac Fisher, Washington's student that linked the spirituals and Washington's racial uplift strategy in the 1931 Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration, were anomalies. More often people misread or misunderstood Washington's subtle message. The message seemed to not translate to many whites and Tuskegee students alike.

²⁵¹ Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1907),

This, however, should not reflect upon the strategy itself. Despite Kevern Verney's claim that musical resistance, like spirituals, the Blues, and Jazz should not be viewed as part of an accommodation or resistance strategy but rather one of survival, Washington's use of the spirituals shows that, at least in his case, these performances were the product of all three. Like many of Washington's strategies, the creation of his New Negro through musical performance used a combination of accommodation and resistance to safely uplift the African American race. This strategy did not simply enable "black Americans to bear continuing racial inequalities and social and economic hardship," as Verney suggests with African American popular music.²⁵² The performances of the spirituals were designed as subtle, safe resistance tactics to challenge racial lines and stereotypes. The strategy's failure to alter white America's image of African Americans does not mean it was simply a survival mechanism. It also does not mean that this strategy used by many African American institutions ended up being ineffective at change. Groups like the Fisk Jubilee Singers, Hampton Singers, and Tuskegee Singers inspired African American composers and performers who would become prominent figures in music during the Harlem Renaissance. Figures like Nathaniel Dett, a music director at Hampton, and John Work, a vocal teacher at Fisk University, developed within this tradition.²⁵³ Indeed, William Dawson, a member of the Tuskegee Singers and ultimately the music director at Tuskegee during the Harlem Renaissance, composed and organized the musical program to commemorate Washington's love of the spirituals and racial uplift. These connections across the traditional WWI divide demonstrate that cultural productions were being used to create images of the New Negro well before the traditional 1920s periodization, and these pre-WWI New Negro movements helped build the foundation of the New Negro Movement during the Harlem

²⁵² Verney, *African Americans and US Popular Culture*, 16.

²⁵³ Paul Allen Anderson, *Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 79.

Renaissance. Finally, Booker T. Washington's participation in this tradition belies the depiction of him as an accommodationist or Uncle Tom, and instead shows that Washington should be viewed more as a pragmatist, an opportunist that challenged racial lines where he deemed it possible.

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